

GIANT FULL-COLOR PINUP OF DINO BRAVO!

August 1982

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# PRO Wrestling

## ILLUSTRATED

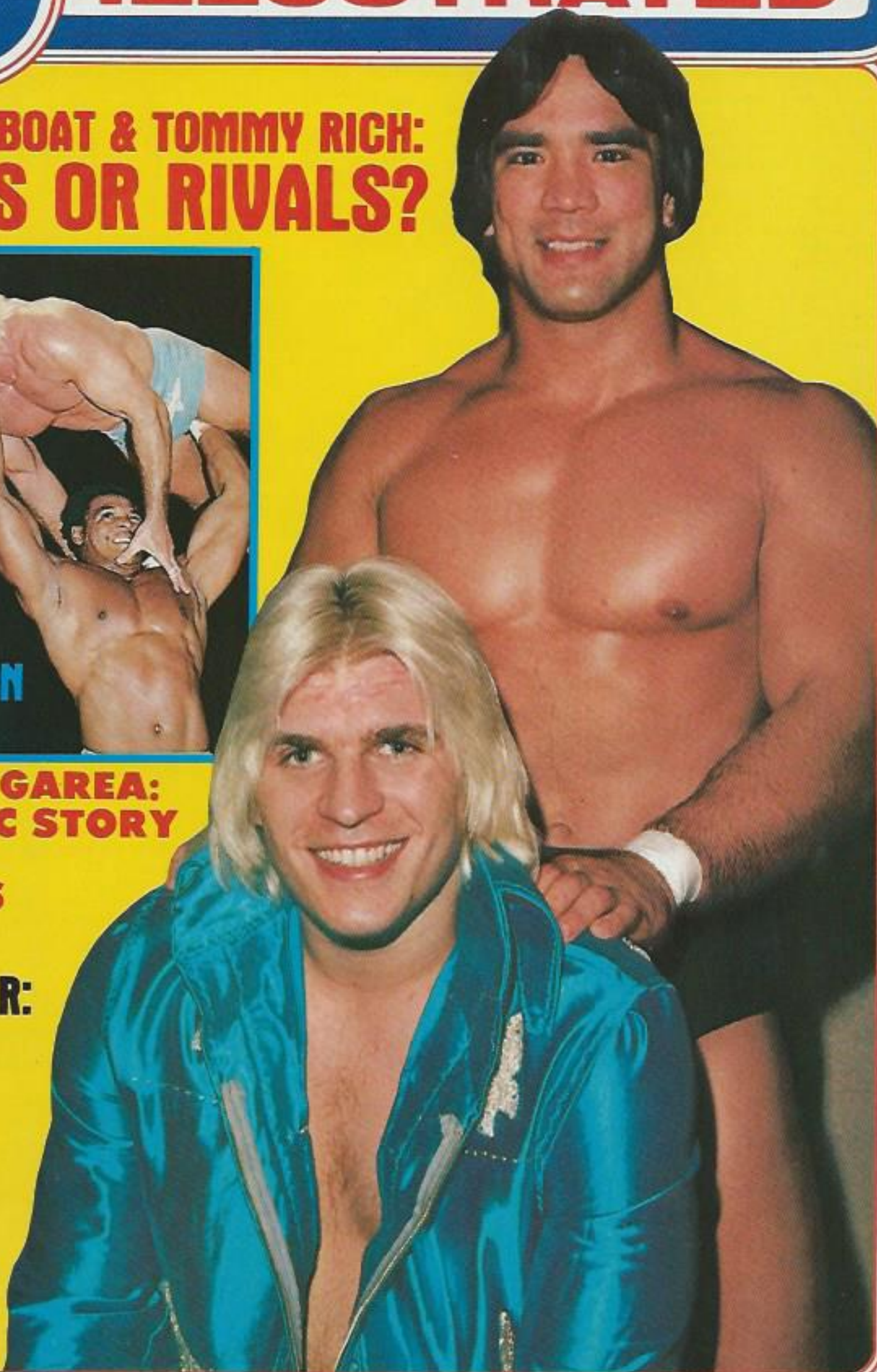
**RICK STEAMBOAT & TOMMY RICH:  
FRIENDS OR RIVALS?**



Beginning  
Of The End?  
**RIC FLAIR  
FALLS TO  
AN UNKNOWN  
CONTENDER**

**MARTEL & GAREA:  
THE TRAGIC STORY  
OF THEIR  
LAST DAYS  
TOGETHER**

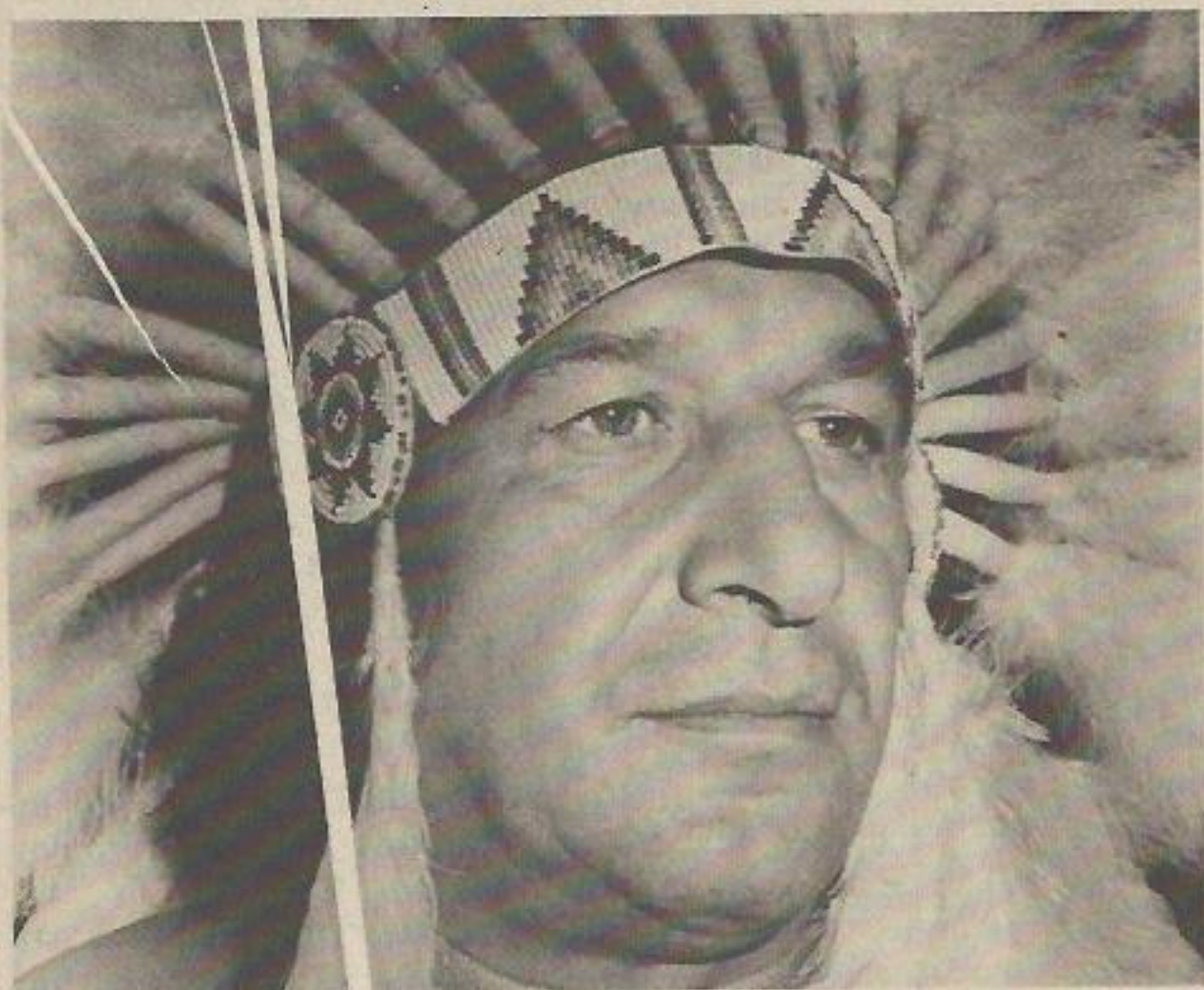
**RODNEY PIPER:  
THE MOST  
POWERFUL  
VOICE IN  
WRESTLING**





# KING'S COURT

By Peter King



*Veteran Chief Jay Strongbow has returned to the WWF, land of his many conquests. And he has brought along a surprise, a man by the name of Jules Strongbow, the Chief's younger brother.*

**C**HIEF JAY STRONGBOW carefully folded his ceremonial headdress and placed it gingerly in his suitcase. His long black hair was matted all over his face, stuck there like glue with sweat. Strongbow closed his suitcase and sat down on a bench in the old dressing room of the arena in Allentown,

Pennsylvania. "It's good to be back," he said and smiled.

Strongbow has returned to the WWF. In his first match, the Chief overwhelmed a Lou Albano-advised wrestler named Black Demon. Strongbow's moves were precise and crisp; his weight is down and he is as fast as he ever was. He appears

to have conquered the many injuries that threatened to end his career.

"I've had broken legs, busted arms, concussions, torn muscles, you name it," Strongbow said. "Actually, even now, I've got a minor shoulder injury; the doctor calls it some sort of an impingement. Says I'm gonna need surgery to correct it. But that would mean I've gotta lay off wrestling for six, seven months. I don't have the time for that. There's too much to do here."

Strongbow always was a man of few words. I've known the man for more than seven years, and the longest conversation I ever had with him couldn't have lasted for more than 10 minutes. "There's an old saying among my people," Strongbow once told me. "Words are like the peep of the sparrow; action is like the thunder from buffalo hoofs. I am a man of action."

Strongbow's return to the WWF came as a surprise. Usually, rumors and half-truths begin to circulate weeks before any wrestler arrives in an area. But Chief Jay Strongbow just showed up at a WWF arena, signed a long-term contract, and he's back.

"I've still got a lot of scores to settle," Strongbow said. "I see that crazy Albano is still here. That man and me go back a long way. Greg Valentine is here. I believe I still owe that man a beating. And there are others. But I just didn't hop a plane and come back to the WWF on a whim. I've got a plan. And it includes this man over here."

Strongbow put his arm around the shoulder of a young man who had been sitting

*(Continued on page 52)*



# RINGSIDE

With Bill Apter

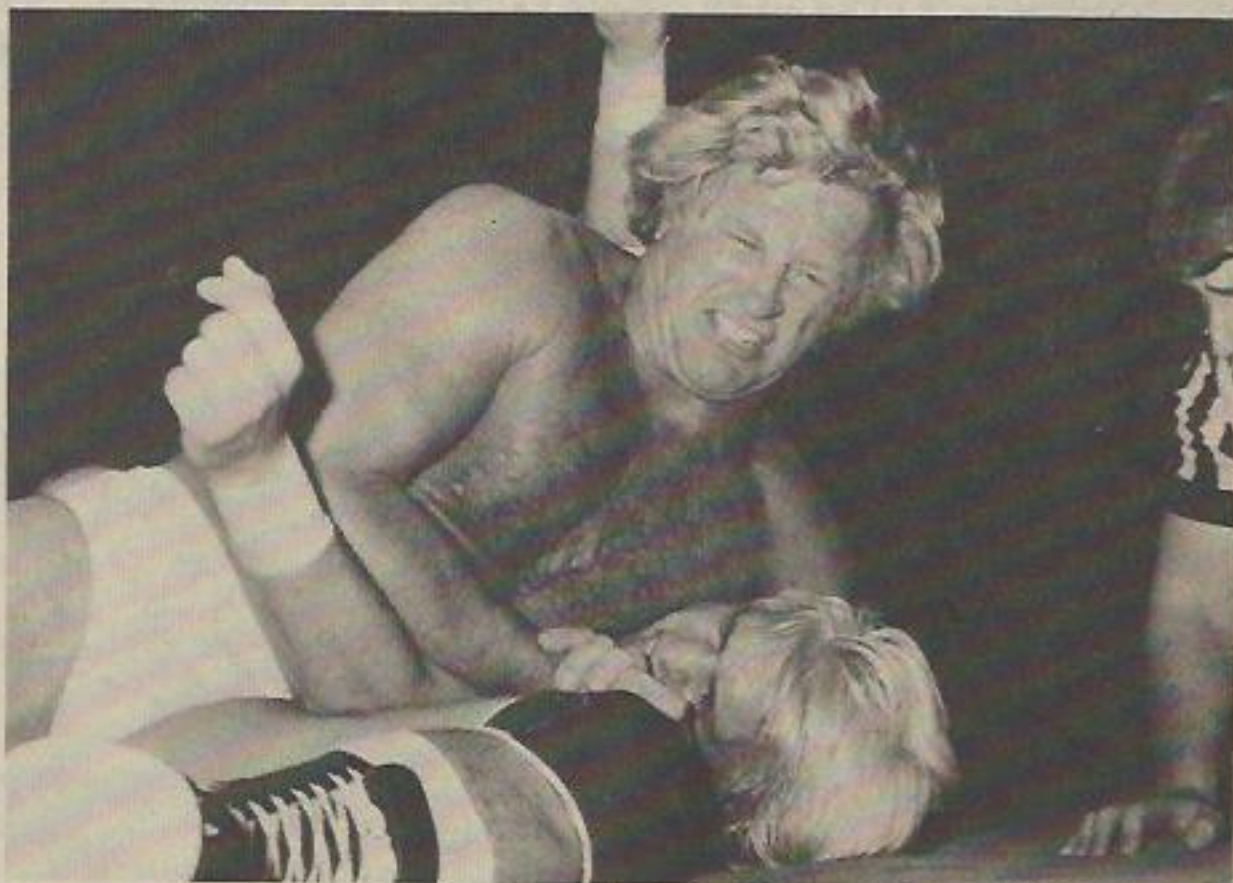
**T**HE FLORIDA TITLE belt is once again secure around the waist of Mr. Wrestling II. As you recall, II lost the belt to wrestler/manager James J. Dillon, who was illegally assisted by Avalanche Tyler. The masked man assures Florida rooters the belt will remain his for a long, long while.

Wahoo McDaniel teamed with none other than Magnificent



*Mr. Wrestling II gives the victory sign after regaining the Florida title from James J. Dillon.*

Muraco during the National Wrestling Alliance tag team tournament Western Finals. The duo jelled perfectly as a team and won. They are slated to wrestle the winners of the East Coast tourney in a best-of-seven series to decide



*Nick Bockwinkel firmly applies a headlock on Tommy Rich during their controversial AWA title match in Houston. Tommy has filed an official protest with the AWA in hopes of receiving a rematch.*

the winner of the NWA belts.

King Kong Mosca is grappling in the Mid-Atlantic area, as is the notorious Killer Khan... Tommy Rich has filed a formal protest to get another shot at AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel. Tommy lost his chance to win the belt when Gino Hernandez interfered and saved Nick's title via disqualification in Houston.

Now that Rick Martel has left the WWF area for the AWA, what happens to Tony Garea?

"I dunno what I will do right now," says Garea. "Surely you realize that most of my recent career in the WWF has been in tag team contests. But if I want to go as a full-time single, there is still a big question in my mind." Tony hinted that he may indeed follow Rick to

the AWA and eventually reunite the team.

A big feud has developed in Missouri between Harley Race and Sir Oliver Humperdink, manager of the Masked Superfly. "He is a poor excuse for a man and a manager," says Race. "I'd like nothing better than to put him out of commission once and for all."

Rick Steamboat is wrestling in Japan and mulling the question of whether or not he will continue his career once the tour ends. Sources close to Steamboat have informed us that Rick is very depressed over the wrestling alliances' failure to curb the sport's excessive violence.

The East/West Connection, Adrian Adonis and Jesse Ventura, are looking to wrestle anywhere but

*(Continued on page 54)*



# DRESSING CONFIDENTIAL ROOM

By Stu Saks



WWF champion Bob Backlund prepares himself both physically and mentally for each and every title defense. Bob loosens up his muscles with a series of bench presses (above) and studies some notes prepared by manager Arnold Skoaland (right).

**A** MADISON SQUARE GARDEN title defense has become a very routine affair for WWF champion Bob Backlund.

He arrives at the fabled arena at 6:30 p.m., two hours before the start of the first preliminary match. He spends about a half hour in idle conversation with some fellow wrestlers until 7 p.m.,

when his manager, Arnold Skoaland, arrives at the arena. From that point it is all business. Wrestler and manager go off to a private room where final preparations and strategy is discussed for approximately 45 minutes. The WWF champion then goes off by himself to exercise and meditate, preparing his mind

and body for the struggle ahead. By 8:30, he is fully prepared. For an hour he is able to enjoy himself in his dressing room, watching the matches preceding his own. At approximately 9:30, he is summoned to the ring for the main event of the evening.



Twenty-two thousand fans greet his appearance in the arena as he jogs to the ring behind his manager. When he gets to the ring apron, he throws an arm in the air, acknowledging the cheers of his loyal supporters.

(Continued on page 56)



# WFOCUS

With CRAIG PETERS

## READY, SET, FLEX

The competition and general hatred between two of wrestling's strongest men continues to grow more intense.

Tony Atlas and Jesse Ventura recently competed in a televised arm wrestling match. The encounter was stalemated for some time, but Atlas soon began to pick up an advantage. Suddenly Ventura broke the hand grip and threw the table at Atlas causing chaos in the ring.

A week later, the two men engaged in a pose-down, again on television. Each man had to run through a series of bodybuilding poses and the crowd on hand was to choose a winner by their applause. Again Ventura became outraged, this time by the crowd's negative reaction to



ATLAS ARM WRESTLES VENTURA

him.

Now Atlas continues to fan the flames: It looks as if his nickname for Ventura, Jesse "The Half-Body" Ventura, is going to stick. My guess is that this feud is only beginning.

## NEXT TIME, TAKE A CAB

The North American title was at stake, Ted DiBiase defending. Paul Orndorff had the match. Unfortunately, he had no way to get to the arena.

Orndorff got into his car to drive to the arena, put the keys in the ignition, and nothing happened. Zilch. Squat. Of course not, how could the motor turn over when nearly a dozen vital parts of the engine had been removed?

Bob Roop stepped in for Orndorff and won the title from DiBiase, the title that Orndorff claims should have been his. Who could have sabotaged Orndorff's car? Nobody knows for sure, but Roop is the number-one suspect. Orndorff claims he's going to get the North American title anyway, no matter what it takes.

## CLOSE, BUT...

The entire Houston area is in an uproar. Seems that Tommy Rich had a title match with AWA champ Nick Bockwinkel. Rich looked very good in that match. In fact, by accounts of those present, it

seemed as if Rich had a victory locked up. Suddenly, Gino Hernandez attacked Rich from behind. "Wildfire" wound up wrestling Bockwinkel, Hernandez and even the referee at the same time.

Rich was, of course, disqualified for hitting the referee. Many fans present feel that Tommy was robbed of the AWA title, and Rich has vowed to exact revenge from Hernandez for what he did.

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# A—ON ASSIGNMENT

BY STEVEN FARHOOD AND RICH COUNTIS

**T**HE PLANE TO Miami was full, and before I could read the "Scorecard" section of *Sports Illustrated*, I had fallen asleep on the shoulder of a rather fascinating brunette. But that's another story.

Countis had another assignment, so I was on my own. I took

many young people in Miami in early May. Couldn't even get a gin and tonic at the bar; only choices were prune juice and warm milk.

Couldn't wait for my rendezvous with Mr. Wrestling II. He was the Florida state heavyweight champion, and this

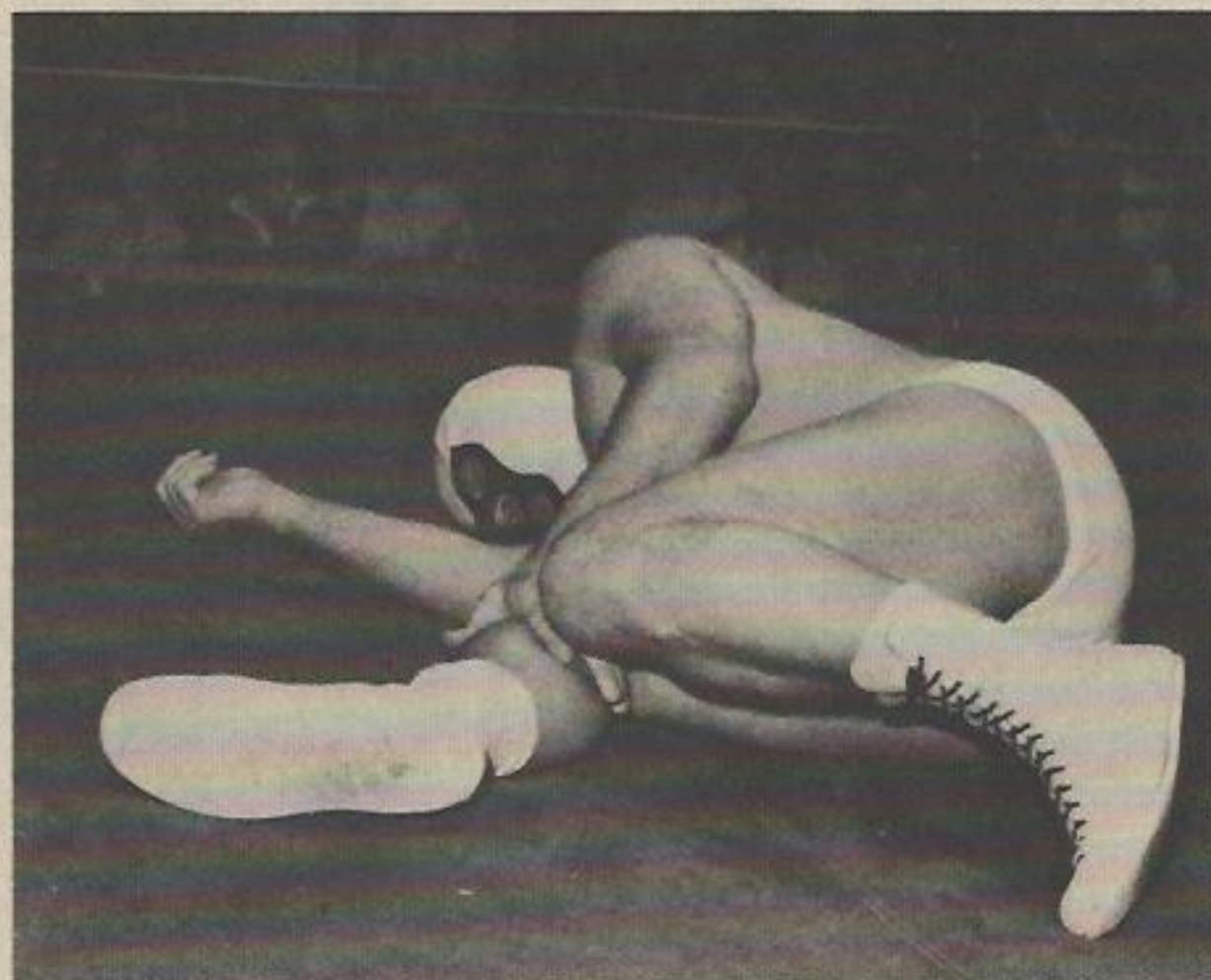
I took another cab, and this time the driver was a Cuban who couldn't understand that I wanted change back from my \$10 bill (the fare was \$2.40). I told him in English to keep the change, and then said goodbye with a few choice Spanish expressions that Pedro Morales taught me in New York one night after he and I got pickpocketed on the subway.

I was so overheated by the time I reached II's room that my feet felt as if I had run through a puddle and the back of my soaked shirt was sticking to my skin. "II," I said, extending my clammy hand, "good to see you again. I hope it's not this hot in the arena."

The paragon of probity responded with a warm handshake and the deep, booming voice that has commanded respect throughout wrestling circles for many years.

"I'll tell you Sven [II has called me Sven ever since I ran into him two years ago during a vacation in Sweden]," he said, "this heat is absurd. You know I could just as easily be in my home in Georgia, taking in the air conditioning and enjoying a nice cool lemonade. But no. I'm here, suffering in this 98-degree heat and overwhelming humidity. Makes you wonder whether this is all worth it, doesn't it? I mean the honor of being champion is great and the money ain't bad. But sometimes I just sit back and say to myself,

(Continued on page 62)



*Is all the pain and suffering worth it? That's the question every wrestler asks himself just about every time he steps between those ring ropes. Mr. Wrestling II collapses after an exhausting defense of his Florida title.*

a cab from the airport down Collins Avenue. The cabdriver told me the air conditioner had just broken. I leaned back and counted the drops of perspiration falling from the tip of my nose to my lap.

I checked into my hotel room and nearly caused a minor riot. The stares I provoked could've killed the Abominable Snowman. You see, there aren't too

was his turf. He was making a defense later that night, and I was scheduled to spend a couple of hours with him before he left for the arena.

"My hotel or yours?" Deuce (only his closest friends call him Deuce) asked when I contacted him by phone. "Yours," I quickly answered. "If I stay here any longer, I might shrivel up and disappear."



If you wish to contribute to Shocket's mailbag, send your letters to:

**TOP ROPE**  
Box 48  
Rockville Centre, N.Y.  
11571

# OFF THE O ROPE

By Dan Shocket

**B**EFORE WE GET to this month's letters, it has come to the point where I must ask you not to send me letters to deliver to various wrestlers. Due to the volume of mail I get for these mat stars, I can't make sure they will each be delivered faithfully. If you want to contact

a wrestler, don't go through me. Instead, send a letter to your local arena. The wrestler will get it. One of the reasons I became a journalist is because I make a lousy postman.

And to this month's rabid blatherings:

Dear Mr. Shocket,

My name is Sara Vail, but I think you would prefer to call me a moron or a cretin or even wormslime. I would just like to know who or what gives you the right to call fans of Tommy Rich, Rick Steamboat, and Ted DiBiase such names?

I could think of a few names to call you, but I'm too much of a lady and I'm not going to put myself on your level of stupidity. I don't care what you or anyone else says or thinks about Tommy, Ricky, or Ted. I still love them and I always will.

SARA VAIL  
Crawley, LA

Dear Ms. Vail,

I have a right to point out when people are moronic, cretinous, or wormslime because it's my journalistic duty. I find it interesting that you don't care what anyone else says. I suppose it's better to wallow in self-imposed ignorance than to listen to opinions more learned than your own.

Dear Dummy Dan:

You have to be the sickest thing in the universe. If you like



*Rick Steamboat, a picture of good sportsmanship! How this guy created such a saintly image for himself is beyond me. If Steamboat can punch a guy while his head is through the ropes, why isn't he called a rulebreaker?*



Albano so much, why don't you go off to the Amazon with him to where he lives along with Snuka, Saito, and Fuji. I bet you are too scared to wrestle Bob Backlund in the ring, not at your smelly office.

You know that Bob Backlund is one of the best wrestlers today. No, he does not bribe people. Albano bribes, you do, and Humperdink does.

If you say one more bad thing about Bob Backlund, I'll come to your smelly office and knock your head around until some sense goes into it. It will be worth the trip, you jerk!

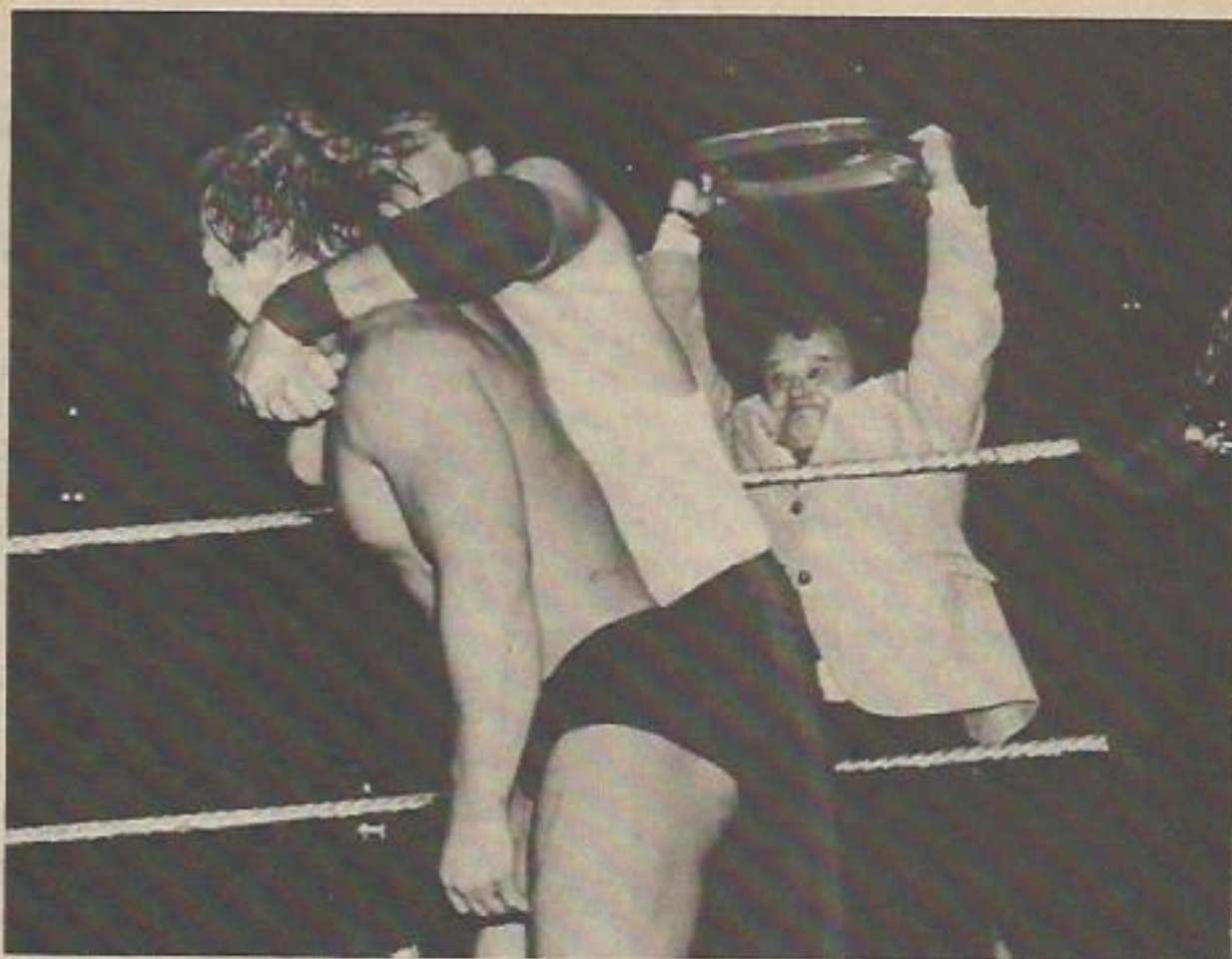
PAUL TRAINOR  
Beverly, MA

Dear "Intellectual" Paul,

Thank you for ably demonstrating the intellectual garbage dump that is the mind of most wrestling fans. I assume my office will be smelly when you visit, as you undoubtedly bring your stench with you. I'm not surprised you're a fan of Backlund. I am surprised you think they'd let you out of your cage to visit New York.

Shocket:

You "think" you're so cool. You put down all the good wrestlers. If you had another



Here's another strictly honorable pair: Bob Backlund and Arnold Skaaland. Remember Sgt. Slaughter's October 1980 title shot in Madison Square Garden? Backlund gets trapped in the cobra clutch. He's about to lose his precious WWF title. Arnold slams a chair over Slaughter's head.

brain, it would be lonely.

Question: How would you get everyone on the East Coast with an I.Q. under 30 into an arena?

Answer: Have Roddy Piper wrestle Shocket.

You probably get along with Piper real good. As my friend would say, you wouldn't know class if you were surrounded by it. Tommy Rich is proof.

MARCIA POTVIN  
Traverse City, MI

Potvin:

Question: What kind of person would be so devoid of intelligence and imagination that she must go to a friend because she can't think of her own old, unfunny jokes?

Answer: See above letter.

Dear Mr. Shocket,

I just read the May issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, and in your column you wrote about Micheal (sic) Hayes.

First, let me say you're a really stupid person. Micheal (sic) Hayes is great without The Freebirds. He's now proving he doesn't have to hide behind anyone. Turning into a fan favorite isn't betrayal; it's brains.

Hayes is forever.

LOLITA J. HANNA  
Cross Lanes, WV

Dear Ms. Hanna:

Before you call someone stupid, make sure he doesn't have to correct the spelling of Michael throughout your letter. You spelled it M-i-c-h-e-a-l. Hayes may not be forever, but a before e in Michael is. □



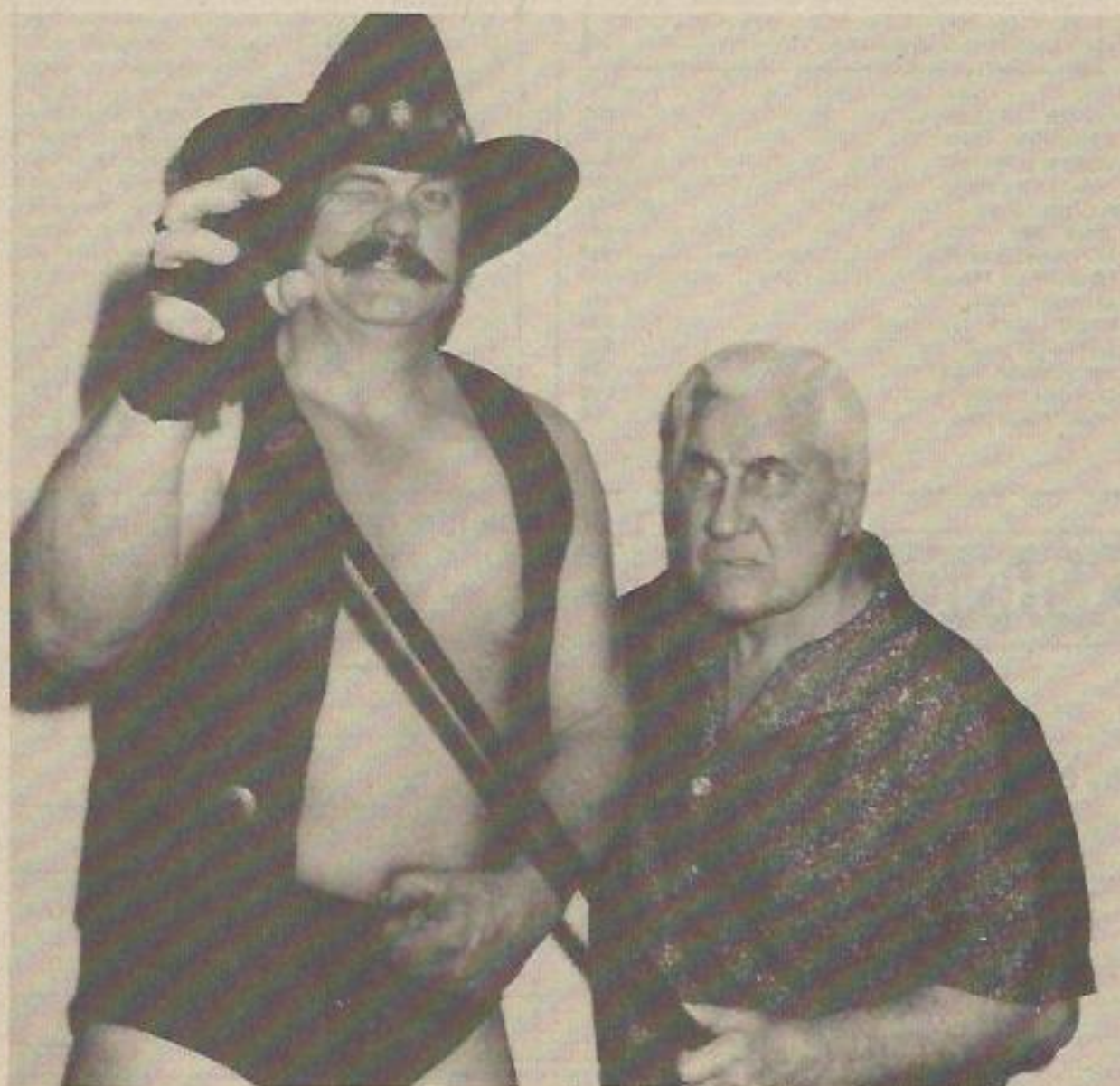
Michael (M-i-c-h-a-e-l) Hayes seems to have a lot of fans these days. And he seems very happy about it. But if I had fans with the intelligence of a toad, I would consider changing my image.



**Every issue, three reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport**

# PRESS CONFERENCE

FRED BLASSIE



*(Fred Blassie, often called the Fashion Plate of Wrestling, is one of the most ruthless men in all of sport. As a wrestler, his animal brutality in the ring was unmatched. As a manager, he attempts to imbue each of his charges with the same brutal qualities that earned him the nickname of "The Vampire," the result of Blassie's penchant for biting the foreheads of his opponents causing bloody wounds and permanent scars. Editors Steve Farhood, Rich Countis, and Stu Saks interviewed Blassie prior to a recent card at New York's Madison Square Garden.)*



**"I'm beginning to get fed up with the refereeing in wrestling. Half of these guys don't know what the hell they're doing, and the other half have no credentials for stepping into the ring as refs in the first place."**



**STEVE FARHOOD:** You're looking good, Fred. It must be due to the success you've been having lately.

**FRED BLASSIE:** That's right. Steve. You know my tag team men, Adrian Adonis and Jesse Ventura, they're the East-West connection, they're the most powerful and skilled tag team in all of wrestling today, and it's only a matter of time before they become tag team champions. They're the best.

**STU SAKS:** Do you think that Adonis and Ventura could defeat Mr. Fuji and Mr. Saito?

**BLASSIE:** Of course. Fuji and Saito are good, but it's only a matter of time before my men become champions.

**RICH COUNTIS:** But I just saw a match recently where Adonis and Ventura went up against Tony Atlas and Andre



*To achieve his goal of total domination in the WWF, Fred Blassie signs only the sport's top rulebreakers. Opposite page: Blassie and the 6-7, 320-pound Blackjack Mulligan. Above: Blassie joins East and West in Adrian Adonis and Jesse Ventura.*

the Giant. If anything, they sure didn't win that match, I thought they . . .

**BLASSIE:** Listen, you pencil-

necked geek, everybody who saw that match knows the truth: Adonis and Ventura had the

*(Continued on page 64)*



Photos By Emmy Yates

# RODNEY PIPER: THE MOST POWERFUL VOICE IN WRESTLING

Roddy Piper is the Mid-Atlantic champion and commentator for the widely viewed *Georgia Championship Wrestling* program. As his hold on the title grows stronger and the ratings of GCW continue to increase, Piper is in the unique position of gradually becoming the most powerful man in the sport

THE OPENING CREDITS flash by and the audience cheers. Host Gordon Solie bids everyone welcome and in seconds the first match is underway. It's another edition of *Georgia Championship Wrestling*, the most widely viewed wrestling program on the air today.

It is usually during that first match that Solie is joined by a second commentator. He is the man who adds the wrestler's perspective to each contest. He is the man who holds the Mid-Atlantic title. He is fast becoming the single most powerful man in all of wrestling.

He is Roddy Piper.

Thousands of fans love him, thousands of fans hate him. One thing is certain, however: There isn't a wrestling fan who's seen him who hasn't got an opinion of him one way or the other.

In an open letter to Piper, Eric Wallis writes that "it is very wonderful that the people of America have the chance to see you on national television." Eric closes his letter stating that he believes Piper to be "a genius in commentating as well as in wrestling."





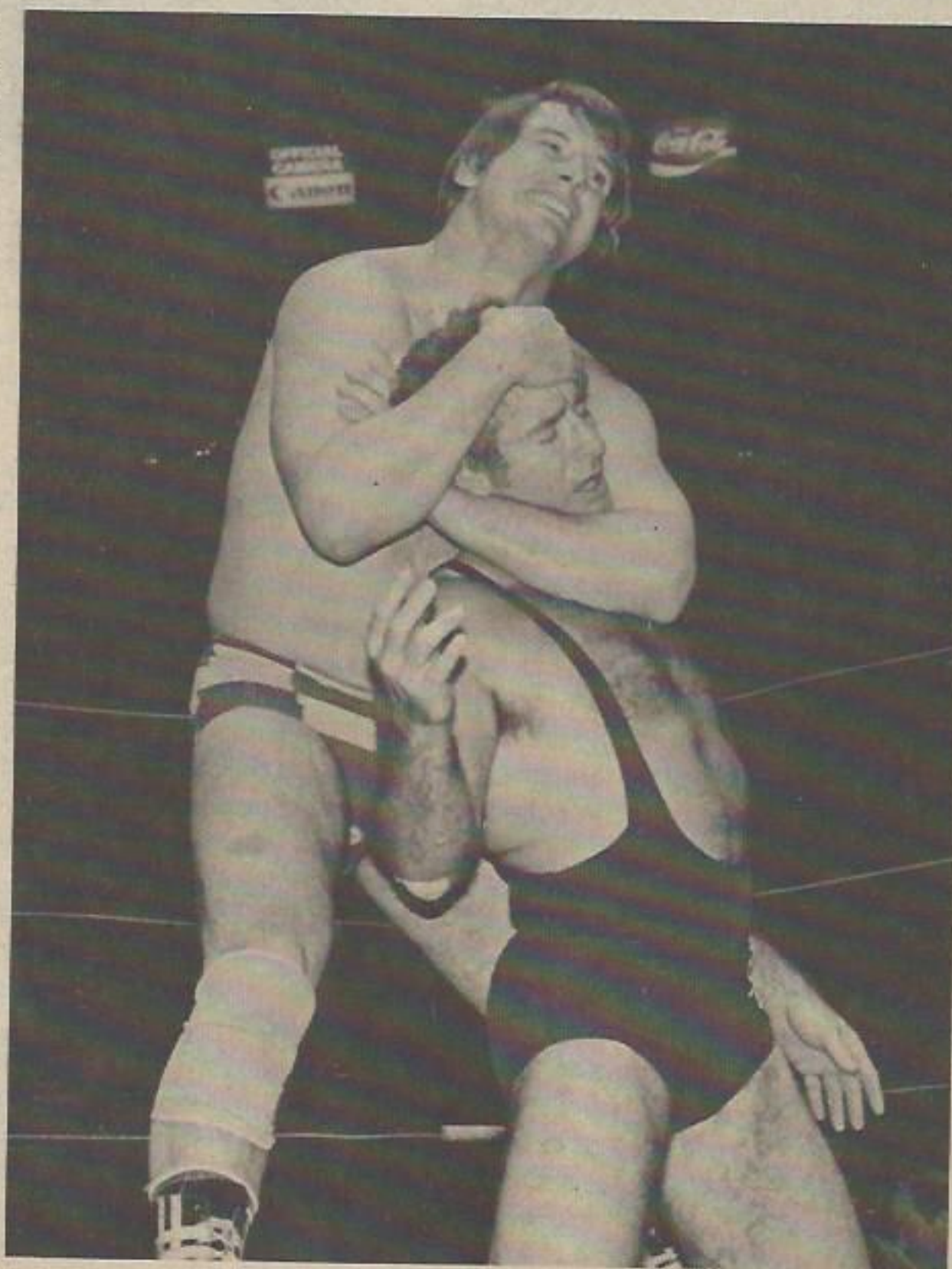


Piper grills Brad Armstrong during a television interview as his father Bob looks on (above). Roddy is a bit more cordial to Gino Hernandez, who has brought along a bottle of champagne to, as he said, celebrate his gorgeousness (above right). Roddy's ugly feud with Bob Armstrong (right) has stirred the emotions of wrestling fans nationwide.

Another Piper fan from Lawrence, Kansas, who is only identified by the initials K.J.B., writes: "Hats off to Rod Piper for adding some color and flash to *Georgia Championship Wrestling*. Granted, Mr. Solie is quite good, but Roddy does provide some interesting insights and views, even if I don't necessarily agree with all he says."

Yet the anti-Piper forces are also strong, and the following letter is representative of dozens of pieces of mail our office receives each day.

"Take Roddy Piper off *Georgia Championship Wrestling* and put him in the loony bin" a disgruntled fan wrote. "Piper totally ruins the show. He is a disgrace to television spitting out all of his babyish frustrations like that. Gordon Solie shouldn't have to put up with Piper's sadistic 'comments,' nasty interruptions, and nauseating ego trips."







The pro-Piper fans state that he is a fair observer of action in the ring. Chris Sherlock of Monroe, Georgia, disagrees.

"Let me give you an example of how 'fair' Piper is," Sherlock writes. "Recently, on *Georgia Championship Wrestling*, Piper attacked Brad Armstrong without provocation while Armstrong's back was turned. When Bob Armstrong came to his son's aid, he was ambushed by Piper's two main cohorts, Gary Hart and Kabuki. That's fair? Hardly."

There is no question that Piper's commentary is drenched with egotism at every turn. Despite that fact, Piper continuously draws attention to wrestlers on television who perform exceptionally well; wrestlers who, one would think, Piper would do everything in his power to discredit.

Tommy Rich is a perfect example of this quality in Piper's commentary. In a recently televised match, Rich was very close to los-

*Piper (backed by Gary Hart) and Tommy Rich (backed by Bob Armstrong) have words during a broadcast of "Georgia Championship Wrestling." Gordon Solie serves as mediator.*

ing his contest against a very skilled preliminary wrestler. Suddenly, Rich reversed the advantage and nearly pinned his opponent. However, this occurred very close to the ropes. Sensing that his opponent might place his foot on the rope causing him to break the hold, Rich hooked his leg around his opponent's leg, preventing him from reaching the rope and gaining the pinfall win.

When this occurred, Piper's praise for Rich and that maneuver was unmatched by anything he's said in weeks. "That was great," Piper said with typical hyperactive enthusiasm, "that was a fantastic move. Did you see how expertly Tommy Rich brought his leg around and kept his opponent from reaching the ropes? That

was fantastic! Tommy Rich is a great wrestler, a great wrestler, but not as great as the fantastically great Roddy Piper!"

As always, Piper's praise is tempered by the egotist's perspective. Nevertheless, there are many fans who would not have believed that Piper would praise Tommy Rich unless they had seen it with their own eyes.

As more and more homes nationwide gain access to cable television, they also gain access to *Georgia Championship Wrestling* and the comments of Roddy Piper. As this trend continues, Piper's influence on public opinion grows as well.

In addition, the Mid-Atlantic championship title reign that Piper began on November 1, 1981 when he defeated Rick Steamboat, continues to grow longer.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind: Roddy Piper will be a major force to contend with as wrestling continues into the decade of the '80s. □

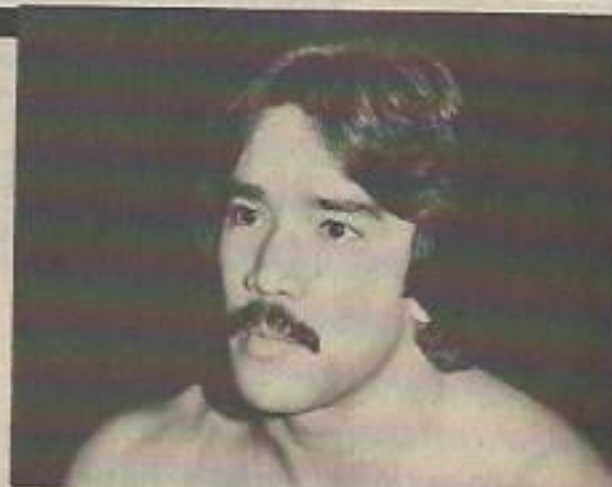


# WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

Every month, our reporters will compile wrestlers' most revealing quotes. Often catching the grapplers with their guards down, our reporters will work endlessly in obtaining interesting quotes on a variety of subjects

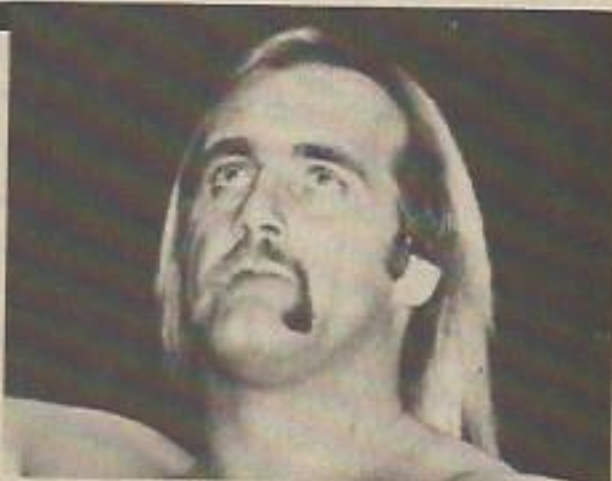
## RICK STEAMBOAT

"I realize that Ric Flair has been going through some very tough times. Every titleholder does. In a way I understand, and that's why I can forgive him for the troubles we just went through. If two good friends can't put their troubles behind them, then they might as well hang it up for good."



## HULK HOGAN

"I swear that Nick Bockwinkel is going to hear from me again. He ducked me for long enough before he gave me a title shot, and then after I beat him, he pays off some officials and saves his precious little hide. Well, next time he won't be able to hide behind technicalities. I'll crush him."



## TONY ATLAS

"Jesse 'The Body' Ventura? How does Jesse 'The Half-Body' Ventura sound? He's just an absurd man. I try to arm wrestle him fairly and he attacks me with the table. We have a posedown to let the fans decide who has the better body, and he loses by a mile. He's nothing but a big crybaby."



## KEVIN SULLIVAN

"I want to thank all my fans, particularly all of the beautiful women who have written letters of support to me, for their continued enthusiasm. I may not always have time to answer my mail, but I do read it all and I appreciate the thoughts. Ladies, you're supporting the best, don't ever forget it."



*(Continued on page 51)*



# LOOKING AT...

## Matt Brock:



SOMETIMES I REALLY have to wonder what's happening with some of these young turks these days.

Hulk Hogan goes flying off to Hollywood for a part in Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky III* where he plays a wrestler called "Thunderlips."

Jesse Ventura takes time off from his wrestling to play bodyguard for Mick Jagger and those screamers he calls a rock and roll band during their tour last summer.

Then there's Gino Hernandez.

When he first turned pro I thought that here was a young man who would finally show the world that scientific wrestling is not a dying philosophy among rookie wrestlers. Gino really showed a lot of guts in his first year or two. There were even a couple of thoughts that told me he might develop into another Lou Thesz if given enough time and if he stayed on the same track.

The summer of 1978 changed it all. Something must have really slipped in Gino's upstairs, because before you knew it, there was Gino locked in a bitter feud

with Jose Lothario, the man who called Gino a friend and helped train him.

Then there was the incident that same summer where Gino kicked Johnny Valentine. It might not have been so bad if it was during a match, but Johnny was walking with a cane, having just been in an accident, and he wasn't even wrestling. He was escorting brother Dale Valentine into the ring for his match with

Hernandez.

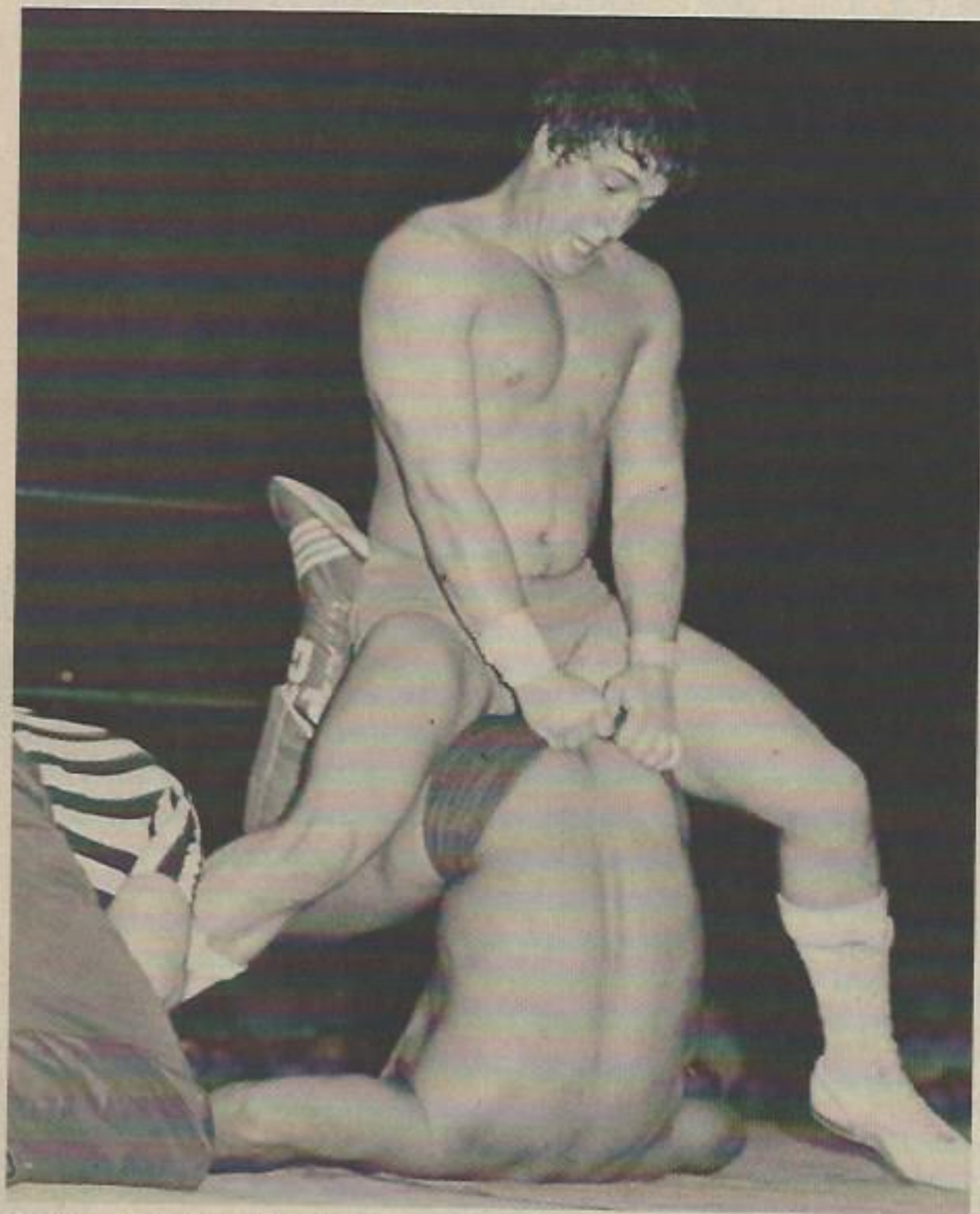
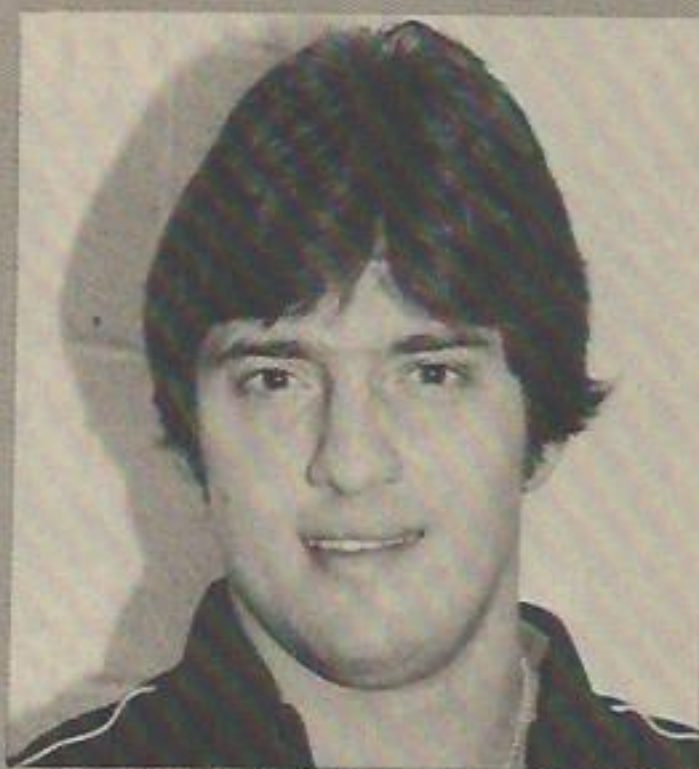
Well, after all that, the fans turned sharply against Gino. They haven't changed their minds, either. Oh, every once in a while you get a flock of young girls who swoon over Gino's boyish good looks, or who are admiring him for the fact that he hangs around with all sorts of movie stars, but that's about it.

Yeah, I guess that's where I started off this column, huh?





# GINO HERNANDEZ



*Hernandez's illegal tactics leaves his opponent beaten and embarrassed (above). Gino is constantly seen in public with the "beautiful people" (opposite page).*

Talking about how various things sidetrack people from wrestling, as has happened to Hogan and Ventura.

Gino Hernandez hangs around with people like Farrah Fawcett, that blonde airhead who really attracts the jet setters. Well, Gino thinks he's a jet setter, all right. Trouble is that he forgets where his original notoriety came from: wrestling.

Sure, Gino, take from wrestling and don't give back. If it wasn't for the squared circle, the closest you would have come to Farrah would be the cover of *TV Guide*. Now that you're a star, though, you turn your back on the sport and on the few fans who actually have stuck by you these long years.

Ah, I'm babbling again. But people like Hernandez make me sick. Too much Hollywood, too much glitter and glitz.

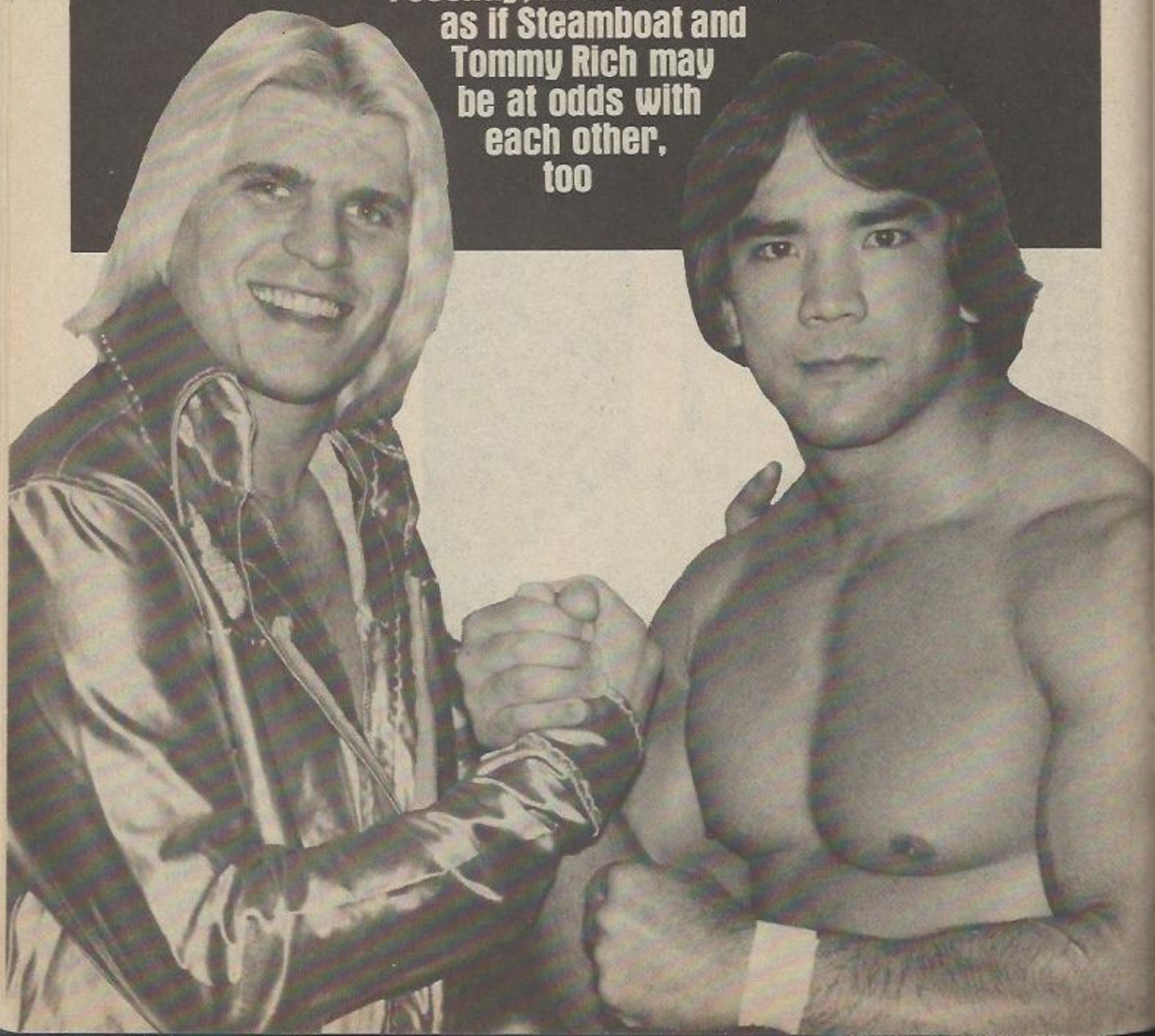
Rhetorical question of the month: Why can't people just stick to what they do best and not bother trying to stick their noses into places where they shouldn't be in the first place?

Go back to wrestling, Gino, you'll never make it as a leading man. □



# TOMMY RICH & RICK STEAMBOAT: FRIENDS OR RIVALS?

When the NWA heavyweight title is at stake, even the strongest of friendships can crumble into dust. Ric Flair's friendship with Rick Steamboat fell under question recently, and now it looks as if Steamboat and Tommy Rich may be at odds with each other, too





**W**HEN RICK STEAMBOAT and Wildfire Tommy Rich appear on the same wrestling card, it's an event that fans do not want to miss.

That's precisely why thousands of fans packed a Columbus, Ohio, arena recently to witness Tommy Rich wrestling Harley Race, and Rick Steamboat against Austin Idol.

Much has been written about Rick Steamboat and his relationship with Ric Flair. Everyone knows that Tommy Rich is good friends with Brad and Bob Armstrong. But what about their relationship to each other?

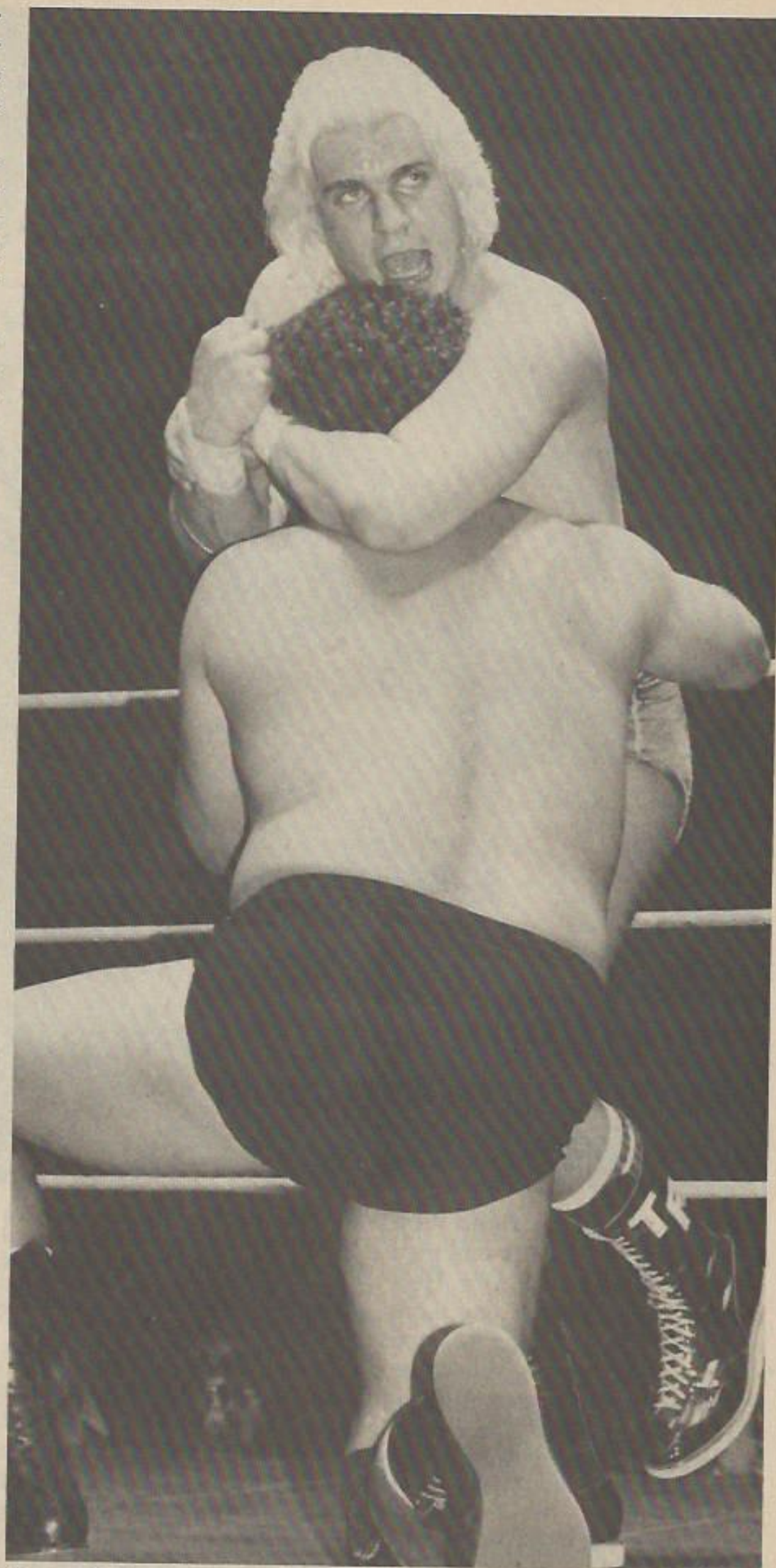
On the surface, both men want the same thing: Ric Flair's NWA heavyweight championship belt. Yet once you scratch beneath the surface, their objectives may not be so clear. While they stand in opposition to each other in that they strive for the same goal, they remain two of a kind by virtue of their similar relationships to their fans and their constant ability to maintain dignity in a sport that has ruined so many men before them.

It was a rare treat, indeed, when *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* happened to be on hand in the dressing room where Steamboat and Rich discussed wrestling and their respective futures.

Rick Steamboat had already showered and changed when Tommy Rich returned from his match with Harley Race, exhausted and drenched in sweat. There was a smile on his face, however, and he appeared to be in a receptive mood for talking about wrestling in general, and his attitudes towards the sport in particular.

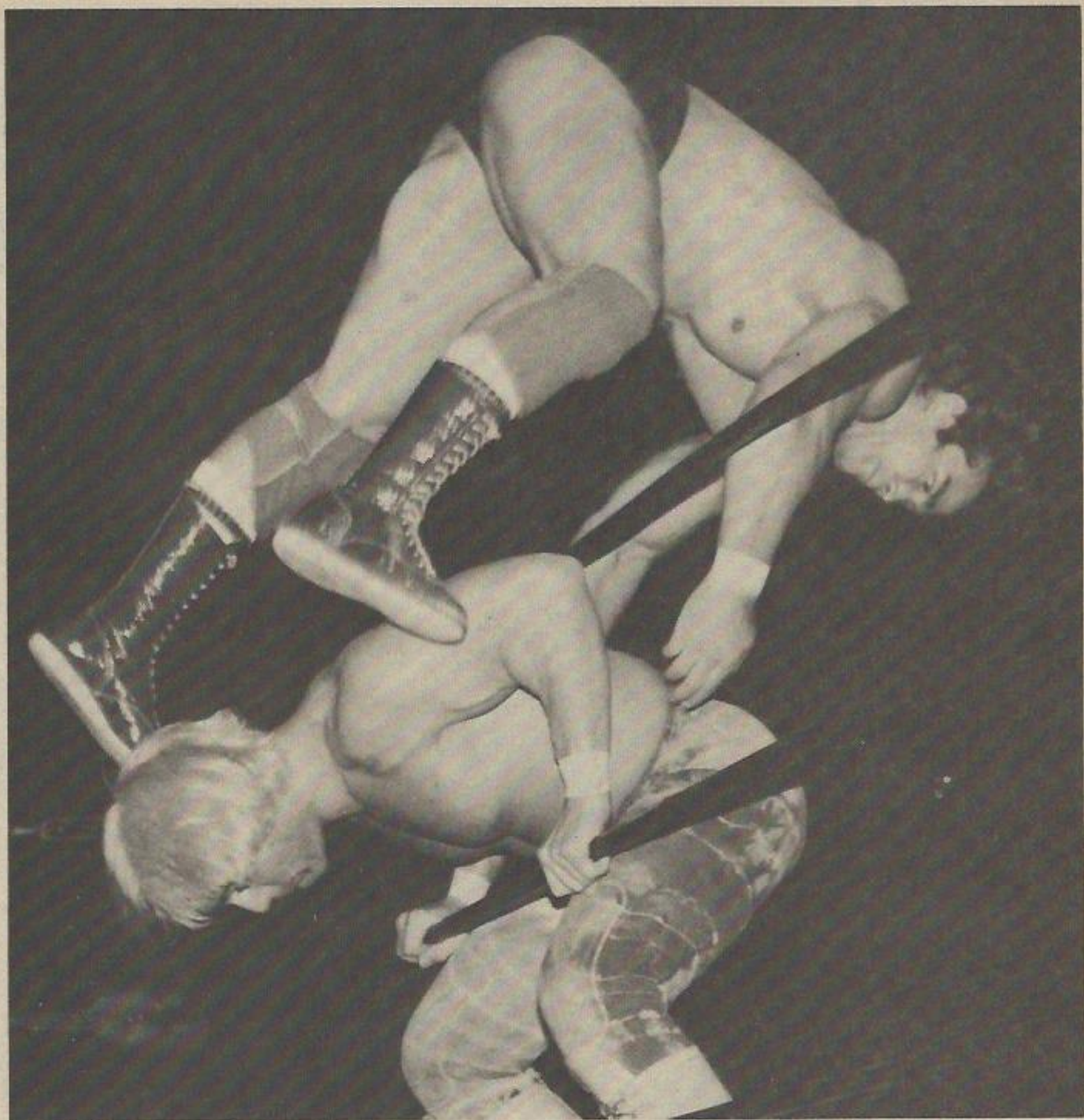
"You appear pretty pleased with yourself," noted Steamboat as Rich entered the room. "How did it go?"

"Real well," replied Tommy,



Tommy Rich ensnares six-time NWA champion Harley Race in a headlock. Rich, himself a former NWA champion, is working toward another title shot. And that could very well mean a direct confrontation with Rick Steamboat.





"I think I did all right. You know, Harley Race is one man you've got to look out for. He's hungry for that belt one more time, and he's willing to step over anybody and everybody he has to in order to get it. Well, I'm not about to let him use me as a stepping stone, and I think I made him realize that tonight."

"It's too bad that even the veterans in wrestling, who should really know better and should have developed a more

*Steamboat utilizes his great leaping ability to spring over the top rope and execute a sunset flip on Austin Idol. Steamboat, a former Mid-Atlantic champion, has expressed displeasure with recent trends within the sport.*

humane and sportsmanlike attitude, have to get so cutthroat about the title," Steamboat said. "That's one of the things that really bothers me about this sport. It's athletes turning into businessmen, and I don't like to see the sport turn into too much of a business."

"In a way, though, I can

understand why Race does what he does," said Rich. "He's looking for the glory, he's out to set a record. If I were in his place, I'm not too sure of whether I'd be the same way or not."

"Well," said Steamboat, "I'm pretty sure that if I were in his position, I'd be happy just to have held the NWA title six times and leave it at that."

"I don't know, Rick, you really can't say," Rich answered.

*(Continued on page 50)*



# PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

TV SPORTS

## CLOSE-UP



**D**INO BRAVO IS a wrestler on the verge of greatness . . . An Italian who lives in Montreal, Bravo speaks three languages (Italian, French, and English) fluently . . . First came to the attention of American wrestling fans when he captured the Americas tag team title with partner Victor Rivera in the mid '70s . . . Later won the Americas singles title . . . At 6'1", 246 pounds, he combines great strength with breathtaking aerial maneuvers . . . Came to the WWF in 1977 and soon won the tag team title with good friend Dominic DeNucci . . . Had great success against WWF rulebreakers, and many fans considered him the heir apparent to longtime WWF champion Bruno Sammartino . . . Was scheduled to wrestle then-WWF champion Superstar Graham on February 23, 1978 . . . But two days earlier, Graham lost his WWF title to Bob

Backlund in Madison Square Garden . . . Bravo decided to leave the WWF instead of waiting for a match against the new champion, whom Dino considered a close friend . . . Went to the Mid-Atlantic where he continued to be successful . . . Returned to his hometown of Montreal in 1980 and quickly won the Canadian International championship . . . Has defended that belt against some of the sport's most rugged men, including Abdullah the Butcher and Hulk Hogan . . . Bravo now hopes to wrestle Backlund for the WWF belt in a strictly scientific match . . . In the past few years, Bravo has become virtually unbeatable . . . Supported by the fans since he turned pro, Bravo repays his followers by always signing autographs . . . A young superstar with 10 years of wrestling experience, Dino Bravo is about to reach his peak.



# CLOSE-UP



## TOUGHEST OPPONENT

"Crusher Blackwell, no question. I've wrestled him a couple of times, and each case was a match where I really had to keep on my toes. I like to win, everybody does, but I also like to be challenged when I wrestle. Crusher Blackwell has offered me my toughest challenges ever."

## GREATEST MATCH

"It was a non-title match, but I think my greatest bout was with Nick Bockwinkel in Omaha, Nebraska. I don't remember the exact date, but it was September of 1980. I got pretty bloody, but I defeated Bockwinkel and won the match. If it had been a title match, I'd probably be holding the AWA belt today."



## MOST HATED OPPONENT

"Man, that's an easy one. John Studd really gets under my skin. He's more of an irritant than sand in your eyes. He's someone that I can really hate and not feel too guilty. We met each other in rings all through the Mid-Atlantic area, and I hope I get a chance to wrestle that scab again soon."

## FAVORITE MANEUVER

"It's got to be the airplane spin. Not only is it an effective weapon, but it's flashy as anything. The crowd loves it when I send somebody into the spin and crashing to the mat. I love the satisfaction of the maneuver done well. Everybody loves it . . . except the victim!"





# Beginning Of The End?

## RIC FLAIR FALLS TO AN UNKNOWN CONTENDER

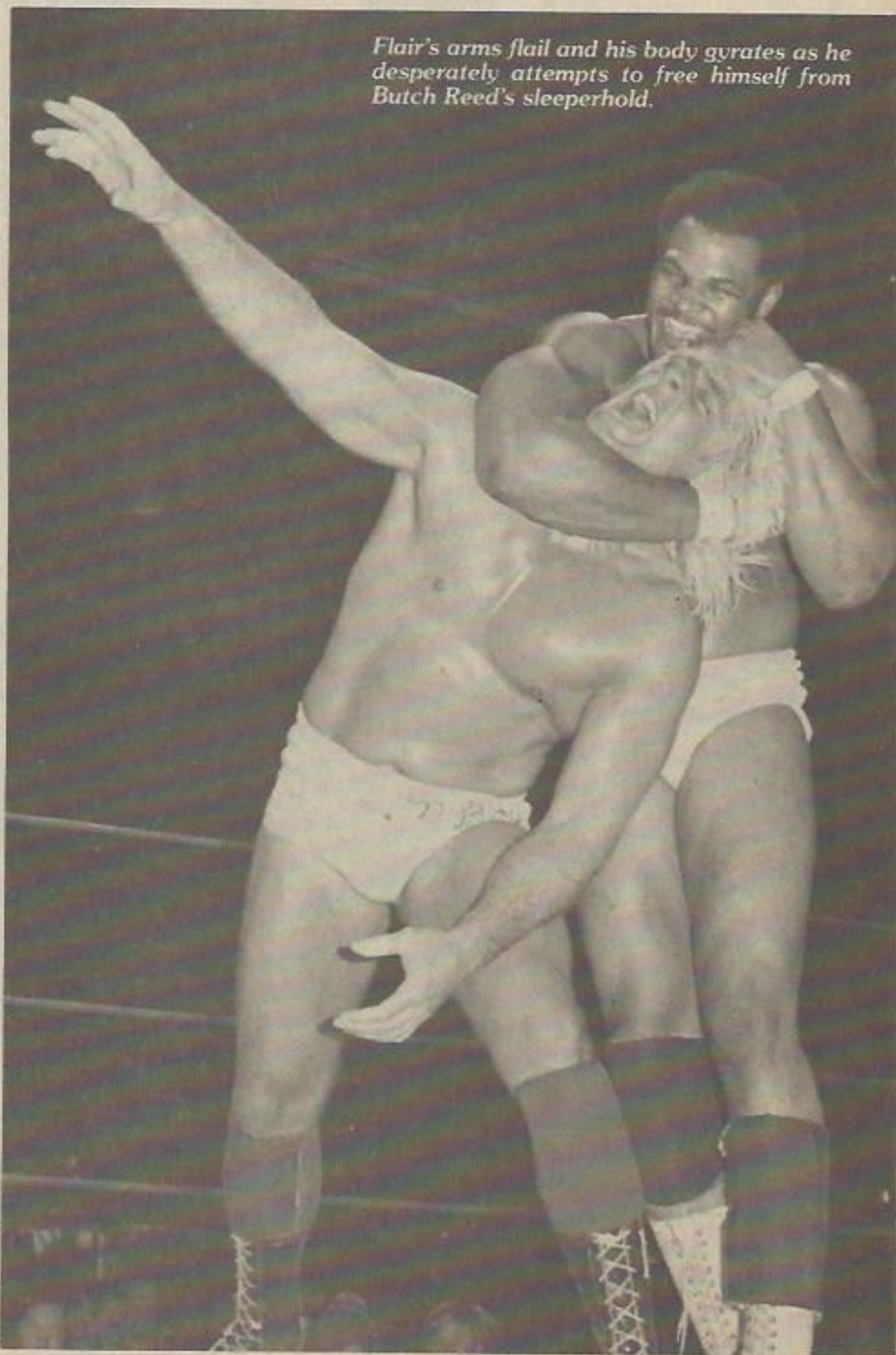
Is the end of Ric Flair's title reign as NWA champion coming near? No one had considered Hacksaw Butch Reed a serious challenge to Flair's NWA belt . . . until he pinned the champ on television. That match got Flair to thinking that his days may be numbered. He may be right

*Photos By Bill Otten*

**R**IC FLAIR ASKED the question to no one in particular.

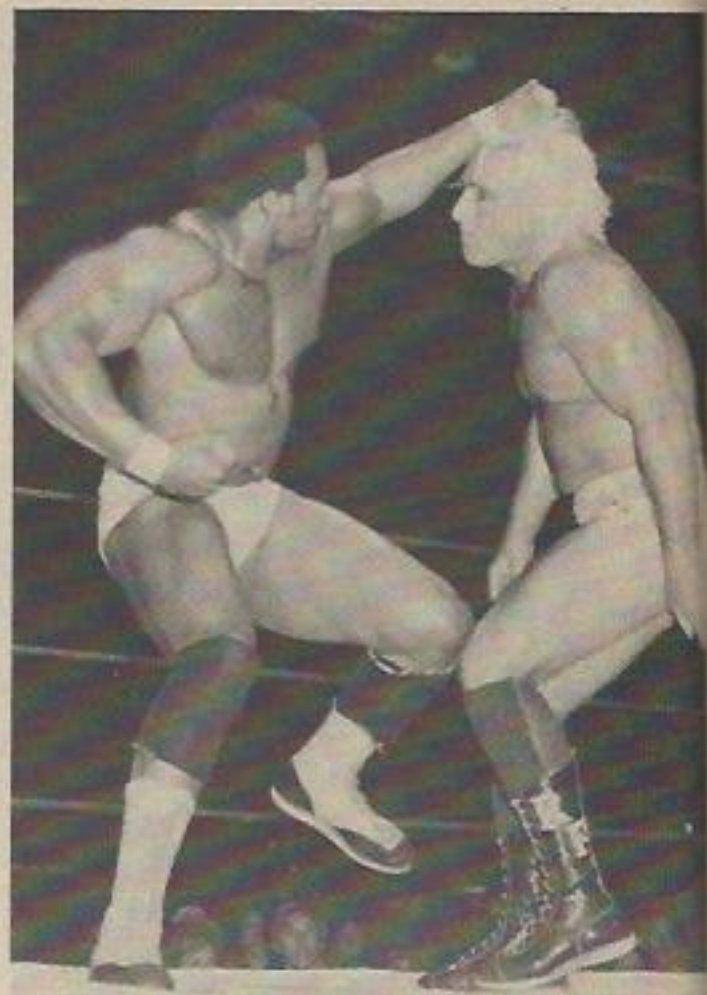
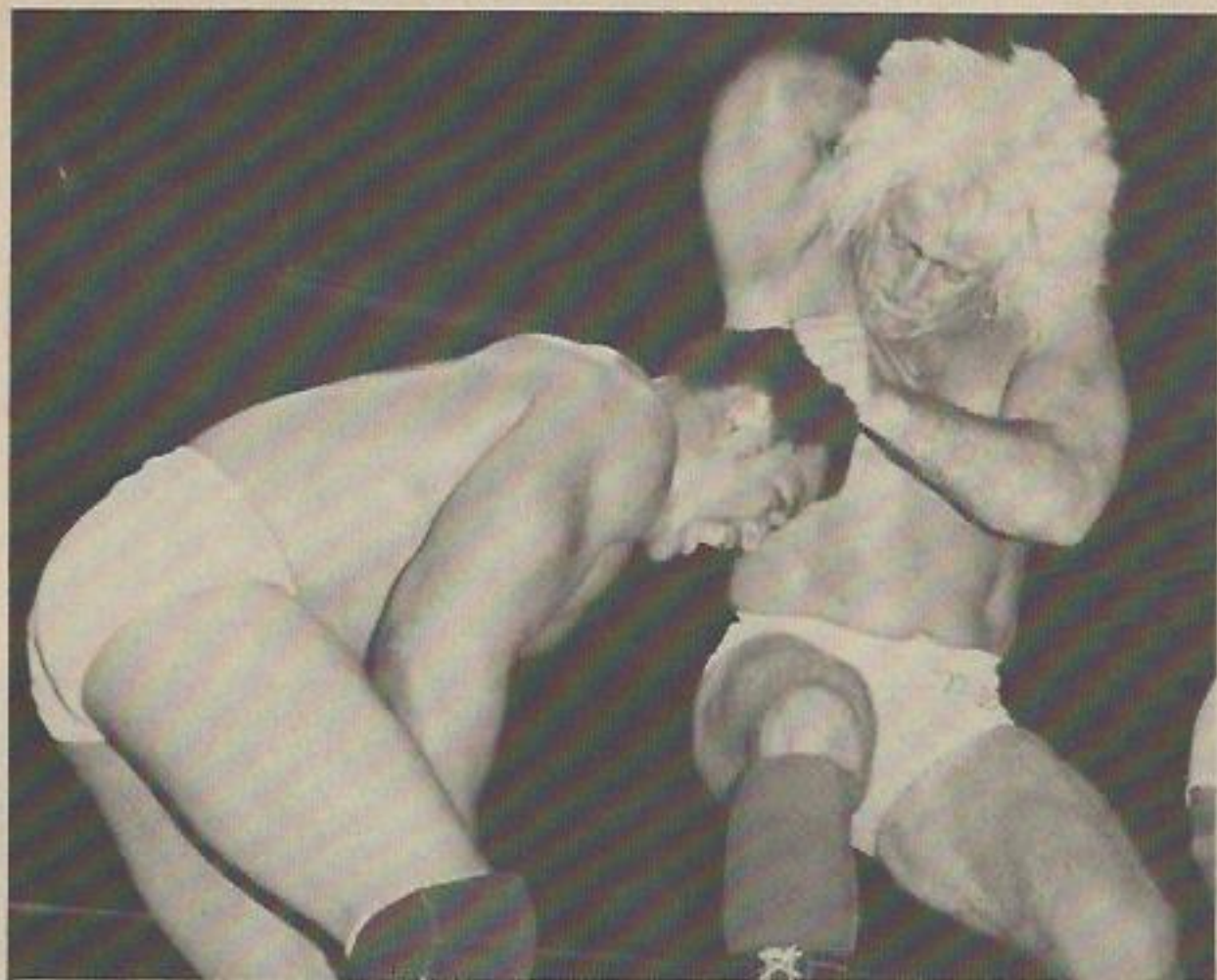
"Have you ever had one of those days where you get to the end and it feels as if you've been sleepwalking for the last 24 hours? It's not as if you suddenly wake up, either, it's more like you just become aware of your situation but you continue to feel like you're asleep. It's very strange. It's like you have very little, if any, control over what you do."

It was an unusually philosophical statement for Ric

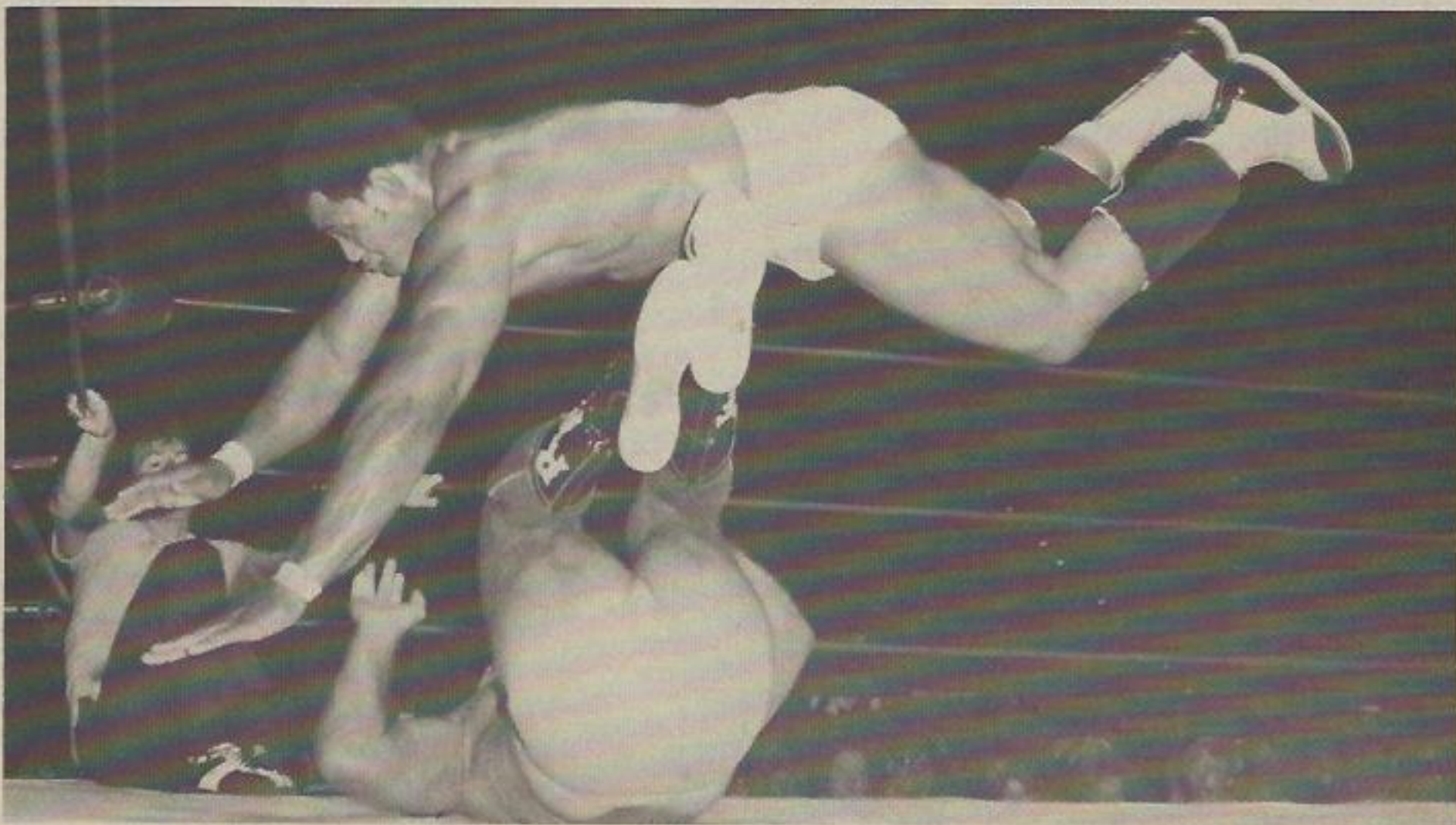


*Flair's arms flail and his body gyrates as he desperately attempts to free himself from Butch Reed's sleeperhold.*





*Flair connects with a devastating elbowsmash to the back of Reed's neck (above left). Grabbing a handful of Flair's hair, Reed has the champion wide open for a right hand (above right). With the referee down in the corner, Flair lifts his knees in time to thwart Reed's diving bodypress attempt (below).*



Flair, but he had just come through a very unusual match.

It all began on Florida television. Flair had an NWA heavyweight title defense against Hacksaw Butch Reed. The match had a 30-minute time limit.

After half an hour, Flair and

Reed had battled to a draw. Flair requested five more minutes and the officials agreed. A few minutes later, Reed had pinned Flair. The crowd on hand nearly went berserk, but Flair was allowed to keep his title as the contract stated a 30-minute time limit only.

Immediately following that televised match, Flair publicly offered wrestlers like the Funks and the Von Erichs bounties of \$5,000 and \$10,000 to eliminate Reed before he had to return to the Florida area. Flair's hope was that if he could take Reed out of action, he wouldn't have



to face him again in a title match and possibly be pinned again... this time *within* the allotted time limit.

Hacksaw Reed knew well enough what Flair was up to, but he courageously ran the gauntlet of bounty matches and emerged intact and able to face Flair once more.

Their rematch took place in Orlando, Florida. The largest crowd in recent memory packed into Eddie Graham Sports Complex to see whether Reed would be able to repeat his television performance and take the championship away from Flair.

Hacksaw Reed entered the ring bubbling with enthusiasm.

He was ready for action and he knew that all he had to do was allow history to repeat itself. If Flair could be pinned once he can be pinned twice. Reed was ready to do it.

Ric Flair entered the ring as emotionless as any living being can be. Quietly, mechanically, he removed his robe and championship belt and handed them to the ring attendant. If he could be pinned once by Reed, he can be pinned twice. Flair was not about to let it happen.

The bell sounded and the match began. Reed made the first move, scoring a quick takedown and ensnaring Flair in a complicated variation of the figure-four leglock. Flair

screamed from the pressure being applied on his legs, but the adrenalin rush was enough to allow him to escape the hold with a swift series of counter-moves.

Flair caught Reed in an armlock, relinquished the hold long enough to send an elbowsmash crashing against Reed's head, and reapplied the armlock. Reed was stunned.

Whipping Reed against the ropes, Flair prepared to use a finishing move as Reed ricocheted back to the center of the ring. Reed was prepared, however, and sent Flair to the canvas with a headsmash to the midsection.

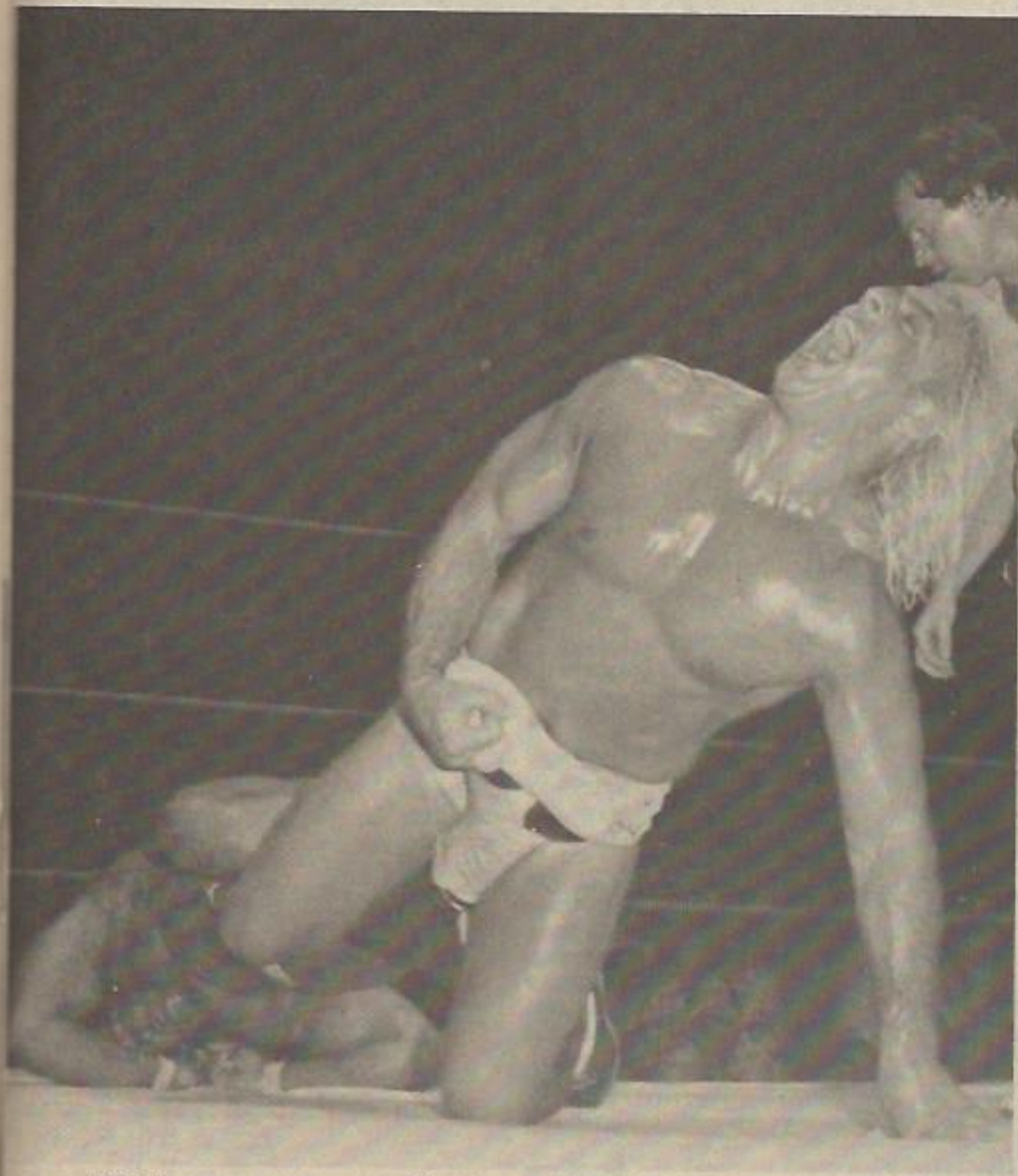
Bouncing off of the ropes, Reed was preparing to move in for the pin. As he drove toward the fallen Flair, however, the champion hoisted his legs into the air and sent Reed flying through the ropes and onto the concrete floor outside of the ring.

Flair followed, and the contest began to take on a new measure of brutality. As if he were exacting revenge for the public humiliation of being pinned on television, Flair attacked his opponent with rage and fury.

But Reed showed a lot of heart. He answered Flair blow for blow, allowing no respite for the weary champion.

The timekeeper's bell rang out a dozen or more times. The official's decision had been made: double-disqualification. Hacksaw Butch Reed had pushed Ric Flair to the brink of insanity. Ric Flair had retained the belt, but at what cost? Reed had proved twice in a row that he was capable of matching Flair move for move, if not actually pinning him to the mat for the three count.

As for Ric Flair... well, it was just one of those days. □



Flair lets out a scream as he tries to snap his challenger's ankle. The NWA champion would later regret asking for an overtime session.



**MR. WRESTLING II  
REGAINS  
FLORIDA HEAVYWEIGHT  
CROWN**

BY BILL APTER

"This is the most satisfying victory of my career," the masked

mat star told reporters later. "Defeating Dillon is always a pleasure, and regaining my rightful title at the same time is the best thing that's ever happened to me. I'm elated for me, the fans, and the great sport of wrestling!"



Mr. Wrestling II is once again the proud possessor of the Florida heavyweight title, having defeated James J. Dillon in a rematch.



## Grand Wizard Keeps Bob Orton Jr. From Title Shot

BY STEVE FARHOOD

NEW YORK, NY—In a surprise move, The Grand Wizard has declared his top wrestler and title contender, Cowboy Bob Orton, is not ready for a championship match against WWF king Bob Backlund.

"We have time," Wizard explained, "and we're not rushing into a title match. We'll wait for the right moment, when Mr. Orton has reached his peak, and then we'll take the title."

This revelation came as a surprise to many experts. It was generally assumed that the Wizard was grooming Orton for a title shot in the near future. Orton was unavailable for comment, but sources close to the wrestler say he is unhappy about delaying his championship challenge. As of press time, there have been no reports about Orton trying to break his contract with Grand Wizard.

## Rick Steamboat's Future Is In Doubt



How many more times will we see Rick Steamboat's hand raised in victory? The popular Hawaiian is considering retirement.

BY STU SAKS

CHARLOTTE, NC—Rick Steamboat will leave the Mid-Atlantic, journey for a short tour through Japan, and then decide his future. There is a possibility he may give up wrestling.

"I don't think I'll retire," Steamboat explains, "but that's a

possibility. I don't know what I'll do after I return from Japan. I've got a lot of possibilities open and I need time to think. So much has happened to me in the last few years that I've got to take some time off and figure out what I want."

## Graham and Keirn Win New Tag Team Title

BY PETER KING

ST. PETERSBURG, FL—The tag team of Mike Graham and Steve Keirn has reunited and appears to be better than ever.

The pair, once owners of the North American, U.S., and Florida tag team titles, can now add the St. Petersburg title to their accomplishments. Graham and Keirn refuse to speculate whether this will be the first step on their road to the NWA title.

## Kevin Sullivan To Become Fan Favorite

BY CRAIG PETERS

ATLANTA, GA—Notorious rulebreaker Kevin Sullivan may start a new career as a fan favorite.

Sources close to the wrestler say he is tired of being booed by fans and is through using dirty tactics to win. "Kevin was once the most idealistic guy in the world," a friend says. "He longs to get back to the clean tactics that attracted him to wrestling in the first place."

## AROUND THE GLOBE

EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ

Blackjack Mulligan is claiming that his recent countout decision over Bob Backlund here in the Meadowlands Arena makes him the official WWF heavyweight champion. "I'm the one and only true champion," Mulligan declared. "I don't care what any stupid commissioner says."

HOUSTON, TX

Chief Wahoo McDaniel has returned to this city and is now competing in tag team matches with Junkyard Dog as a partner. "He's a tremendous tag team wrestler," says Wahoo, "and I feel that our combination is going to be very successful."

MONTREAL, QUEBEC

The match that fans all around the world have demanded may finally happen after all. Contract negotiations are underway for setting up a championship match between Canadian International champion Dino Bravo and Bob Backlund, with the WWF title on the line. "I hope we can get it together," said Bravo. "It would be one of the classic matches of all time."

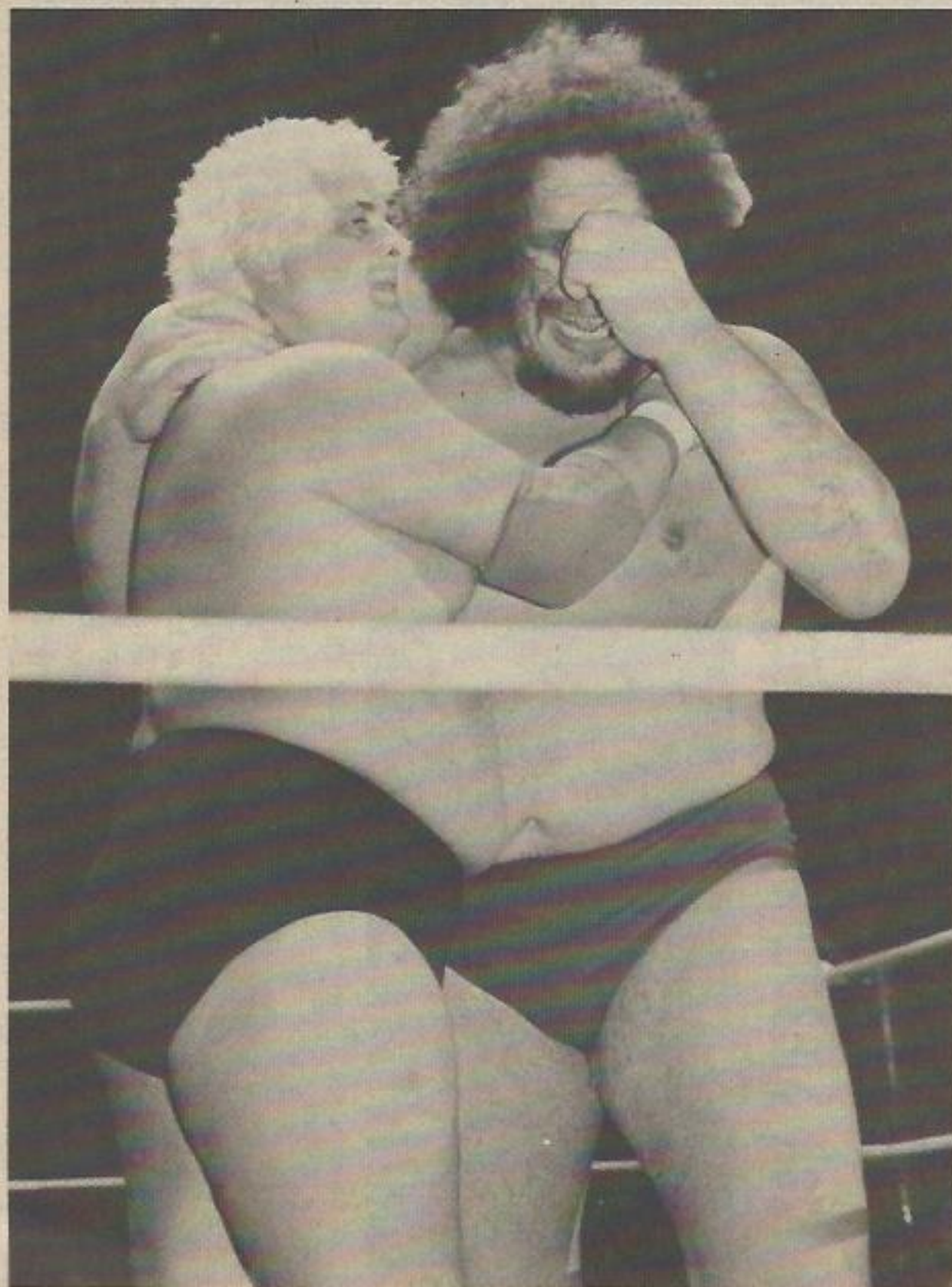
TOKYO, JAPAN

"Pro Wrestling Illustrated" Managing Editor Bill Apter has traveled to this pearl of the Orient to personally cover a major series of important matches. For detailed information and a firsthand account, pick up the September issue of "PWI."



# ANDRE & DUSTY: WHAT WENT WRONG?

*Take two of the most talented wrestlers in all of sport, put them together in a tag team, and you've got an unbeatable combination, right? Not necessarily. When Andre the Giant and Dusty Rhodes joined forces, the result was not exactly what you might expect*



REPORTERS WAITED IMPATIENTLY outside the dressing room. From inside they could hear the shuffling of Andre the Giant and Dusty Rhodes as they gathered their belongings. Neither man was saying anything.

Soon the shuffling stopped. Reporters took out their notebooks and tape recorders. There were many questions to be asked and the answers wouldn't be easy. Still, Rhodes and Andre had to be asked.

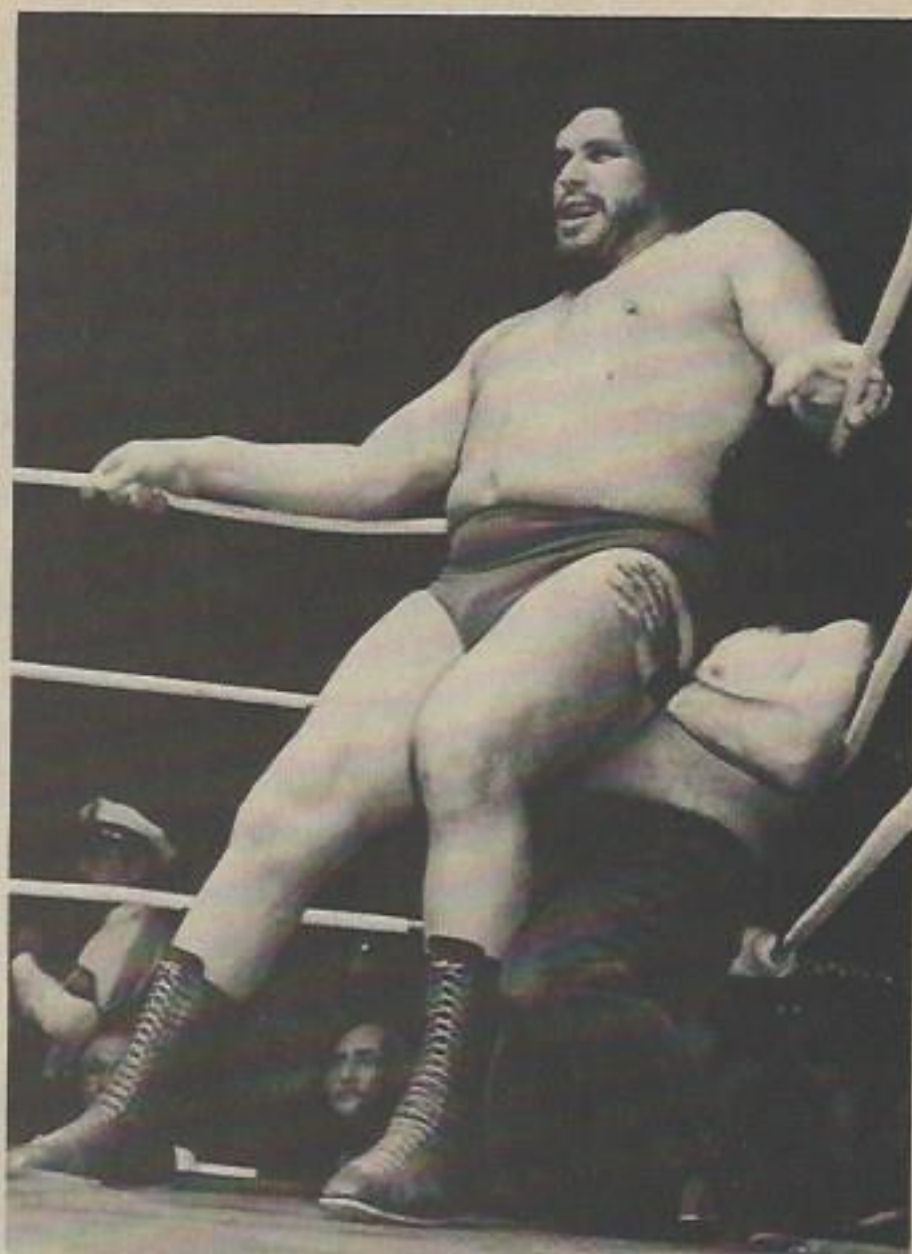
The door did not open. When reporters knocked and asked for the men to come out, their requests were greeted by silence. The door was locked and those inside weren't about to come out.

One by one, the reporters left. About three hours later, one reporter who stayed more from rage than out of a sense of duty, saw the two men walk out of the door. Rhodes looked down at the floor while Andre's eyes darted about, looking for whatever he didn't want to see.

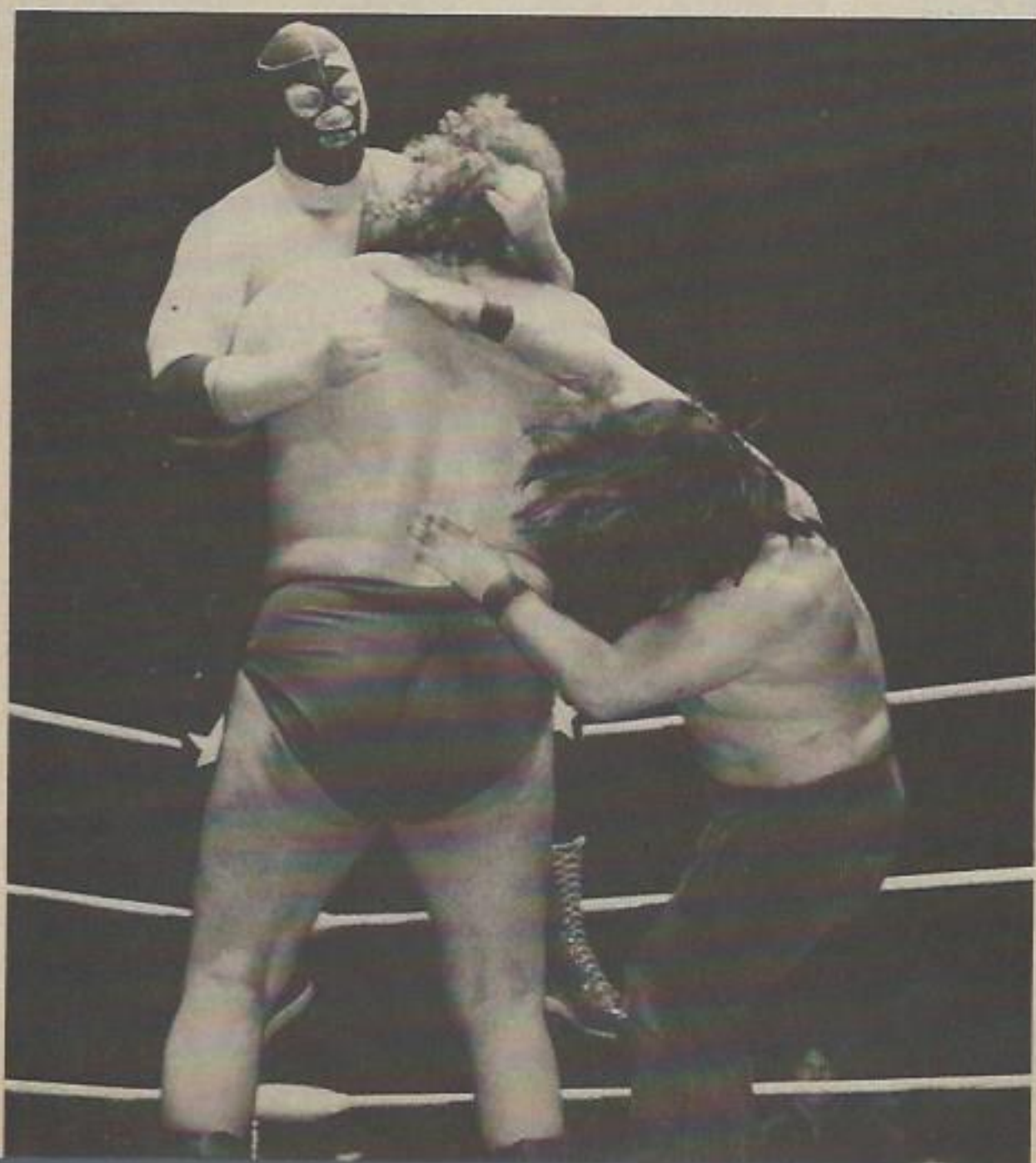
The reporter saw them. He was angry and looking for a confrontation. Yet there was something so sad, so defeated

*Photos By Brad McFarlin*





Rhodes wisely rids the ring of Gary Hart before the start of the match (above left). Andre casually crushes Kabuki along the turnbuckles (above right). Super Destroyer and Kabuki effectively double-team the Giant (below).



about the men that he didn't approach them. Their sorrow was such that he didn't want to intrude. These men had been through enough.

It wasn't like Andre and Dusty to avoid the press. Even during the worst of times, these two men would face the consequences. But this failure was too painful, so much had been expected and didn't happen, that the pair couldn't talk to anyone about it. When they left the arena, Andre and Dusty went off in different directions. Neither man was ever more alone.

The pair had failed to conquer Super Destroyer and Kabuki in a tag team match. It didn't matter that those two men are among the most dangerous tag teams in wrestling history. Andre and Dusty had promised the fans a victory. They broke that promise.

Neither man had to be told  
(Continued on page 66)



# MARTEL & GAREA

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## THE TRAGIC STORY OF THEIR LAST DAYS TOGETHER

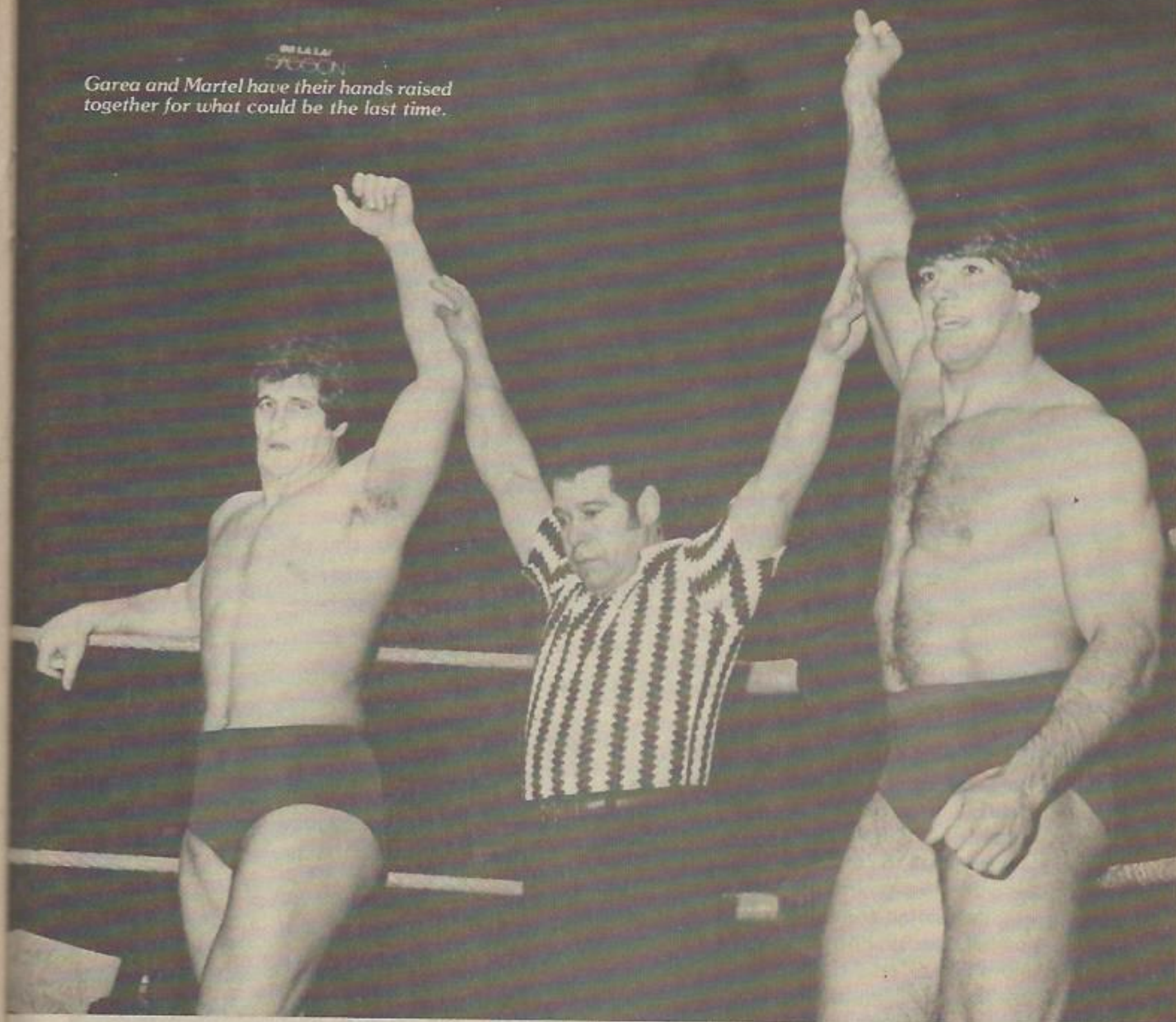
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*Garea's elbowsmash frees Martel from Adrian Adonis' "Goodnight Irene" sleeperhold.*





*Garea and Martel have their hands raised together for what could be the last time.*



**S**OMETHING HAD DIED in this room. You could feel its death in the emptiness. Tony Garea and Rick Martel tried to think of anything to say, but they were silenced by the death. They sat across from each other, staring sightlessly into space.

The decision had been made. Their partnership was ended. The tag team that had twice been WWF kings no longer existed. By this time tomorrow, Martel would be winging his way west. He had new wars to win.

There was nothing for Tony

Garea to do now but leave. Martel's clothes were packed, and there were no more last-minute chores to be taken care of. When Tony walked out the door this time, he didn't know how long it would be before he ever spoke to his friend again. Finally, Tony got

---

**They won the WWF tag team belts from The Samoans and from The Moondogs. They became two of the most respected champions in wrestling history. The time came, however, when Tony Garea and Rick Martel realized that they must go their separate ways. That time is now**





up from his chair, silently shook Rick's hand, and walked away. He wanted to turn back, wish his friend luck one more time, but it didn't seem right. When you leave your ex-partner, Tony believed, you leave clean.

That night, Tony didn't make it home. He went to all the places a city offers to keep a man from returning. Garea saw the sun coming up and felt very tired. It was time to return home.

He considered making coffee but decided against it. Instead, he took off his clothes and flopped on his bed. In the instant between consciousness and sleep, his mind filled with meaningless images that he tried to understand. Then he slept.

Rick was just getting up. He hopped a cab to the airport and checked in. He went to the coffee shop and ordered breakfast. He didn't eat it. Instead, he just sipped his coffee and thought about the last few days.

The Tony Garea-Rick Martel contract with the WWF had expired. The officials were eager to sign up the team for another stretch. The pair also appeared

*Garea drives his foot into Bulldog Brower's solar plexus as Martel looks on approvingly (above). Rarely will Martel be angered enough to do what he is doing to Mr. Saito (below).*





eager at first. They were headed down to the WWF offices when Rick stopped in his tracks.

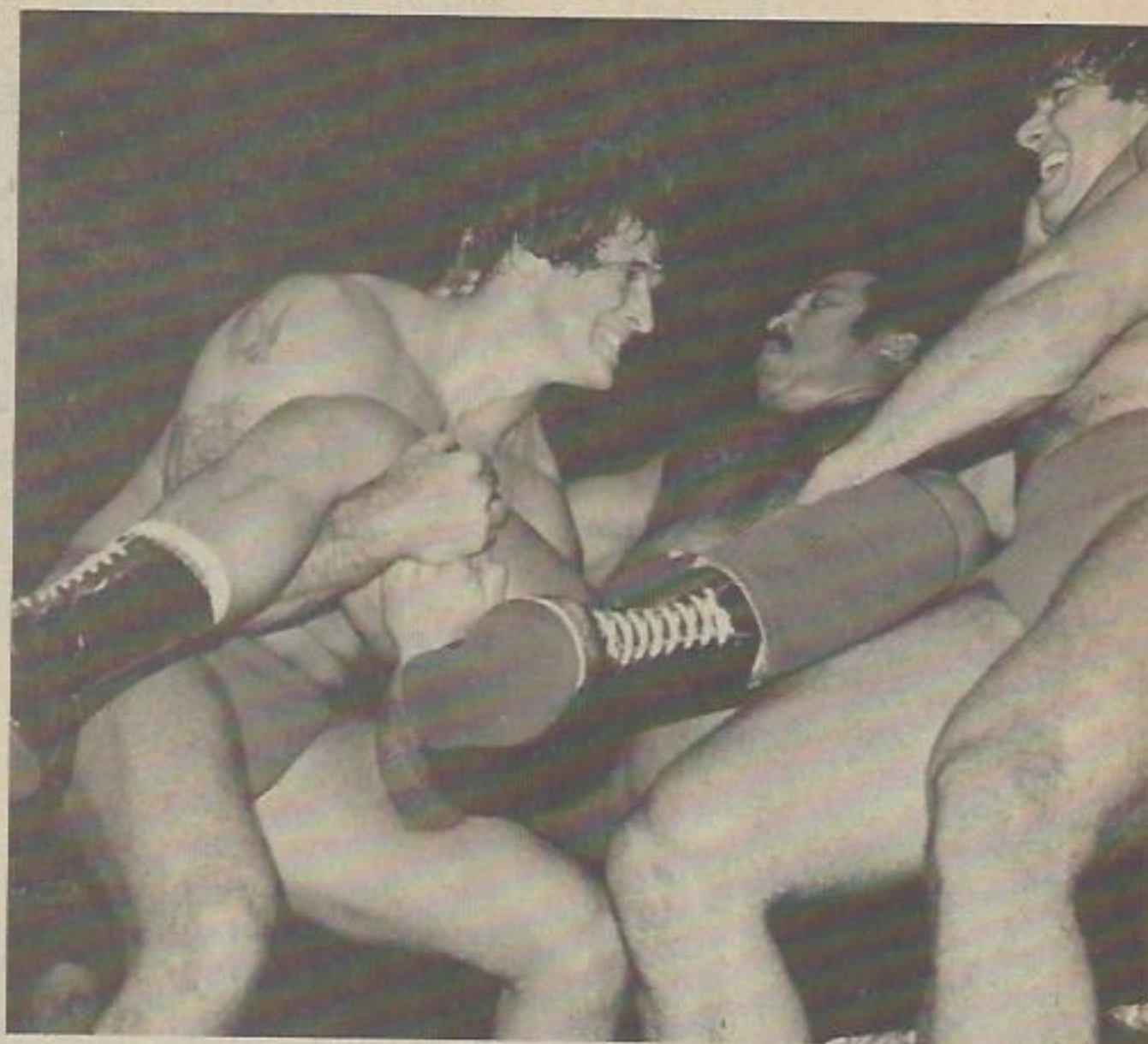
"You know," he said, "we never talked about this."

"What's to talk about?" Tony asked.

"We're about to commit ourselves to another tag team contract. I just think we should talk about it before we do it."

Garea thought a moment and then agreed. They went into a restaurant for what they assumed would be a short conference and a cup of coffee. One lunch later, they were still talking. They continued their conversation on the street, surprised and a little shocked they had so much to say.

It didn't take them long to



*Garea contemplates his next move while maintaining an armlock on Larry Sharpe (left). Tony and Rick are happy to dispose of the pesky Johnny Rodz during last September's 20-man Battle Royal at Madison Square Garden (above).*

things.

After they had lost the WWF tag team title to Mr. Fuji and Mr. Saito, it became an obsession to regain it. They worked too hard, took too many risks, suffered too many injuries, but never got back the title. They lost something even more important than the title. They lost their enjoyment of wrestling.

It was something both felt but neither admitted. Once Martel found himself saying this thought out loud, Garea stunned himself by immediately agreeing.

"I haven't enjoyed myself in a long time," Tony admitted. "I'd go to the arena because I had to. Before, I used to go because I wanted to be there more than anything else in the world. Now comes the toughest question. Even if we won the title again, would we get any enjoyment out of wrestling?"

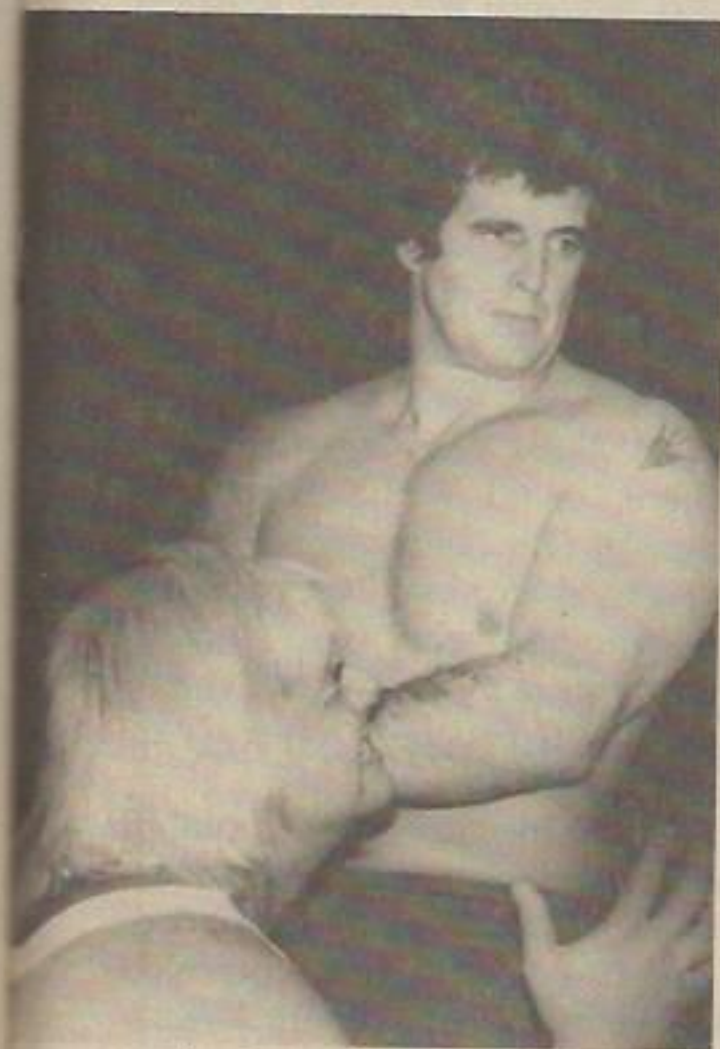
Martel took a long time to

answer, but finally admitted, "I guess not. We've gone too far in pursuing the title to ever return. As long as we're together, wrestling will be a chore. I guess I knew this when I said we should talk about this."

Tony nodded and walked silently on. There was no need to say anything more. The tag team of Rick Martel and Tony Garea was dissolved. They would now go their separate ways, each trying to rediscover the joy they once had in wrestling.

They told the WWF officials, who desperately tried to talk them out of it. They were offered more money, an easier schedule, and any other inducement the officials could think of. Nothing, however, could change their minds.

So Rick Martel found himself flying on a plane heading west. He would pursue the AWA title. He would also try to find what he is afraid may be lost forever. □

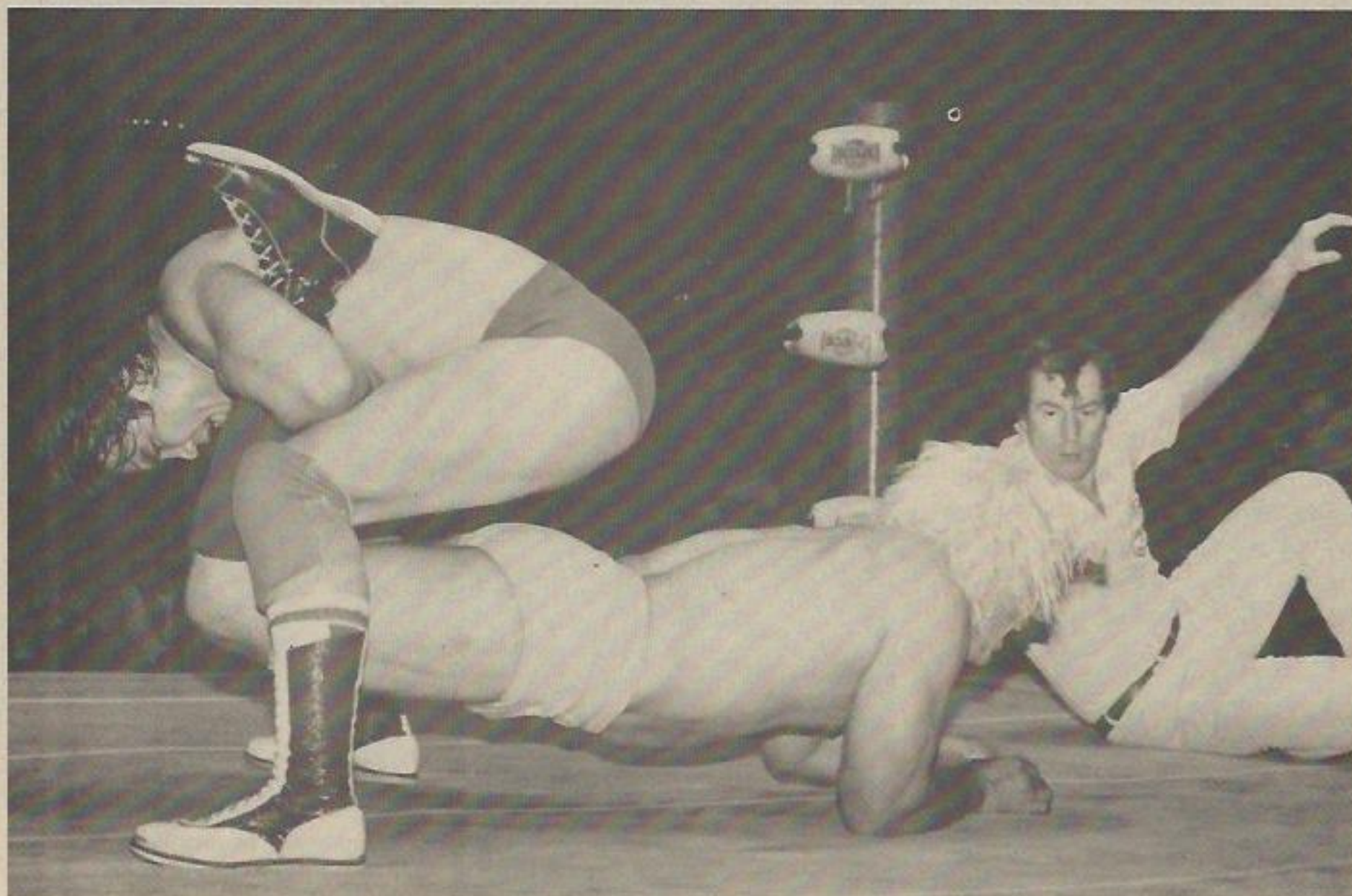


realize their tag team didn't satisfy all their ambitions. Both men discovered something they never admitted to themselves or each other: Wrestling alone is something each of them loved. Being in a tag team made it impossible for them to concentrate on that aspect of the sport. They didn't realize how much it meant to them and how much they missed it. Their talk also revealed other



## Rich & Steamboat

(Continued from Page 34)



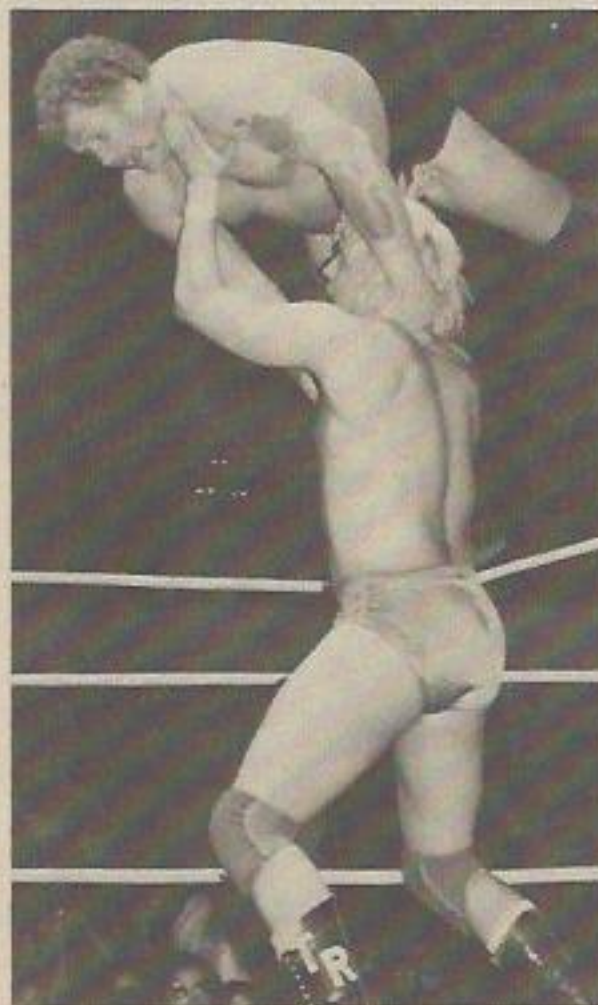
"The title does things to a man. You haven't been there, you don't know..."

"Come on, Tommy, I've had the Mid-Atlantic belt around my waist, I know what being a champion means." There was more than a slight trace of impatience in Steamboat's voice.

"I don't think you do know, Rick," Tommy answered. "I've been there, and I have a little bit of an idea of what the title does to a man. You ought to know that yourself, particularly after what's been going on between you and Flair."

"Well, I like to maintain some sort of standards, even if other men don't," Steamboat replied. "I would hope that if I ever had to meet you in a title match that we would be able to place our personal lives in the background and stick to the sportsmanlike aspects of wrestling rather than bringing in all sorts

*In a brutal match that nearly ended a long-lasting friendship, Steamboat captures NWA champion Ric Flair in a Boston crab (above). Rich lifts Race off the turnbuckles and, displaying enormous strength, throws him to the center of the ring (below).*



of irrelevant opinions and emotions."

"Well, I agree with you there," said Rich. "The only problem with that is when you're champion, everything is relevant to what you do and how you're going to keep the title. It all becomes a very narrow-minded affair."

What neither man pointed out during their discussion, though, is that narrow-mindedness takes over not when you become champion, but when that championship comes within reach.

If both Rick Steamboat and Tommy Rich reach the point where the NWA title becomes readily available to either man, the ultimate question of whether they are deep down friends or title-hungry rivals will likely be answered where it should be answered: in the squared circle. □



# WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

(Continued from Page 29)

## MR. FUJI

"Mr. Saito and I will hold belts for long time to come. These puny men, your Tony Garea and Rick Martel, we chase Rick Martel out of WWF. Rick McGraw and Steve Travis both tiny worthless men. No tag team better than Fuji and Saito, and that's why we stay champions for so long."



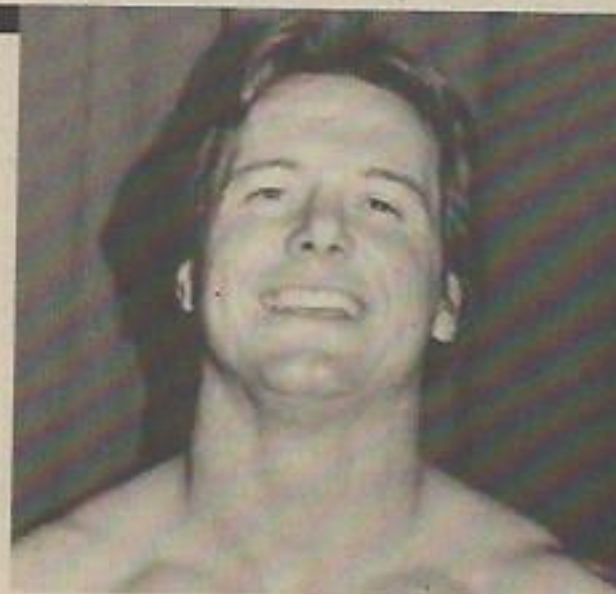
## CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW

"Now that I've got my brother Jules at my side, I am sure that we can combine forces and eliminate those scum from the tag team championship. Of course, I'm talking about Fuji and Saito, and if Jules and I have our way, their days as titleholders are definitely numbered."



## RODDY PIPER

"I can't believe all the talent, all the skill, all the tremendous knowledge that is included in the mind of one man, that man of course being Gary Hart. He's a genius, an absolute genius in wrestling, and a man of honor who keeps his word. He's fabulous. Why, he's almost as great as me!"



## JERRY LAWLER

"Long live the King of Wrestling, King Jerry Lawler, that is. There isn't a single man in the world, least of all weaklings like Koko Ware, Jimmy Hart, or Killer Karp Krupp who can begin to hold a candle to the greatness that I display in the squared circle. I'm the best."





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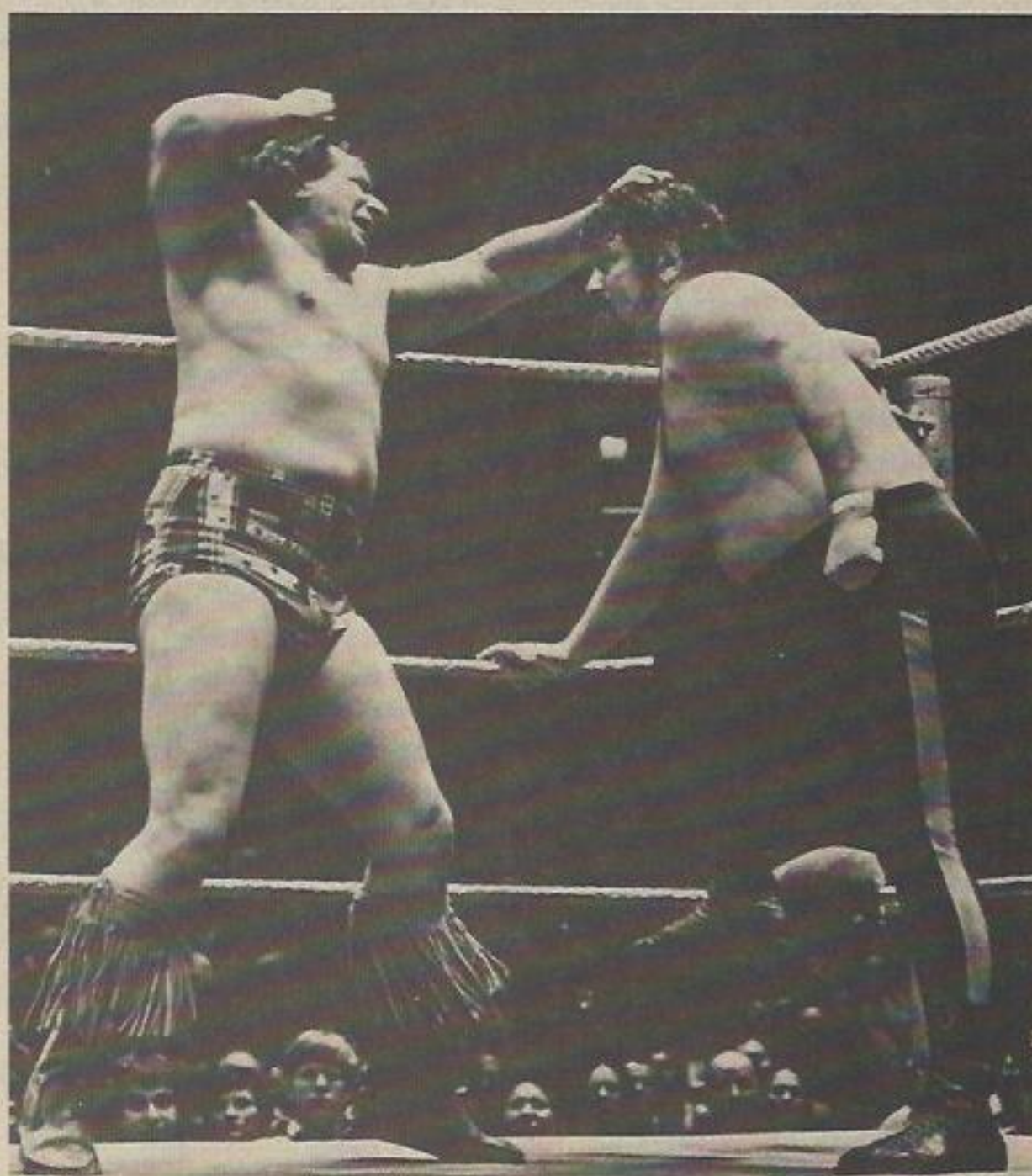
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## King's Court

(Continued from Page 6)



Strongbow and Captain Lou Albano battle it out in Madison Square Garden in 1974. There is a strong possibility that the Strongbows will be challenging Albano's WWF champions, Mr. Saito and Mr. Fuji, in the near future.

quietly next to him. "This is my younger brother, Jules. I may be a man of few words, but Jules is a man of even less."

Jules Strongbow smiled at his brother's joke. Finally, after a good deal of prodding, the younger Strongbow began to talk.

"I love my brother," Jules Strongbow said, "and when he told me he was going to return to the WWF, I said I would come too. Too many times in the past Jay has been attacked when his back was turned. Too many times he needed the aid of a brother. He will never be attacked when his back is

turned again. Between the two of us, we have four eyes. We see all angles."

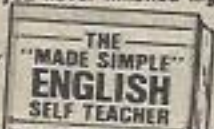
Jay Strongbow looked at his brother and smiled. "I've been pretty successful here in the WWF over the past 10 years," the Chief said. "And now there is a whole new era. One Strongbow kept Albano and his men in line. Two Strongbows will finish him, once and for all. Let all those men like Albano and Fuji and Saito and Snuka and anybody else who wrestles against the rules beware. I am back. And with my brother, Strongbow is twice as good as ever." □



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## Ringside

(Continued from Page 8)

the WWF, says a close friend of both. Word has it that they both feel they were robbed in their individual matches against champion Bob Backlund and will not return until, "The corrupt officials are ousted," as Adonis recently put it.

What a war! Four against two! Bobby Heenan, Nick Bockwinkel,

Bobby Duncum, and Ken Patera against Andre the Giant and Hulk Hogan. Andre and Hogan say they are looking forward to a 10-minute victory.

A sad note: Colonel George Harben, a great wrestler who retired in the early '50s, passed away this past March. Most recently, George served as an



Adrian Adonis and Jesse Ventura, upset over the treatment they claim to have received from WWF officials, are threatening to leave the area.





*Jerry Lawler is very satisfied with the injuries he inflicted on comedian Andy Kaufman.*

advisor in the Mid-Atlantic wrestling area and was loved by all. He'll be missed.

As you have read in the newspapers and seen on television, Jerry Lawler accepted the challenge of television comedian Andy Kaufman and piledrived Andy all the way to St. Francis Hospital in Memphis. We'll be doing a big feature story in one of our upcoming editions on this very unusual match.

Ernie Ladd, now a fan favorite in the Louisiana area, is teaming with another man who just recently endeared himself to the fans, Paul Orndorff! The two recently got a standing ovation as they cleared the ring of The Samoans and their manager, General Scandor Akbar.

Another former rulebreaker who the fans are now cheering is Kevin Sullivan. Since his break with Buzz Sawyer, Kevin seems to like the fans' attention. But we really doubt if it will last. Sullivan, as far as this reporter is concerned, is not to be trusted.

That's all for now. See you at ringside!

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## Dressing Room Confidential

(Continued from Page 10)

The champion has a job to do. He's been doing it for four years. He knows exactly what to do and how to do it. He's got enormous talent. He's got enormous will. He's got enormous stamina, speed, and strength. He's got the most brilliant strategist of scientific wrestling in his corner. All he's got to do is execute.

He removes his diamond-studded championship belt, hands it to Skoaland for safe-keeping, and turns his attention to his challenger.

*Backlund and Skoaland study the challenger across the ring. In contrast to their composed state, the opponent is going through a mental trauma that only wrestling in the legendary Madison Square Garden before 22,000 fans can create. Even before the start of the match, the champion is at an extreme advantage.*

It could be Magnificent Muraco or Jesse Ventura or Blackjack Mulligan or Jimmy Snuka; it doesn't matter. For certain the man is at a severe disadvantage. And it has nothing to do with the man's talent or the strategy his manager has laid out for him. His biggest obstacle is not something that can be worked out in any gym.

It begins when he first arrives at the arena. He sees his name on the Madison Square Garden marquee and his heart skips a beat. Inside the dressing room, he's okay; all dressing rooms are basically the same. But once he begins his walk down the corridor leading to the ring and hears 22,000 negative voices, and he looks up and





sees the retired jerseys of Walt Frazier, Dave DeBusschere, Willis Reed, and Rod Gilbert, and he realizes where he is, nothing again will ever be the same.

He is in Madison Square Garden now. The most famous sports arena in the world. The Mecca of athletics. Every athlete dreams of appearing in this building. Every wrestler dreams headlining a card in this building. There is awe in his eyes and fear in his heart.

The fans don't sense it because they are either distracted by their own emotions or a ranting Albano, Wizard, or Blassie. But the man across the ring knows all about the pressures of wrestling in Madison Square Garden. Four short years ago, he was the man feeling the pressure. He remembers.

"It was the loneliest feeling I ever remember having," Backlund said recently. "You're standing there and you really can't concentrate on what you should be concentrating on. Your eyes dart all over the place. I remember looking up and seeing the New York Rangers' 1940 Stanley Cup championship banner. I had a little chuckle to myself, thinking how long it's been since the Garden fans had a hockey team to cheer about. At that point, I vowed that I would give them something to cheer about."

"What I was able to do," Backlund continued, "was utilize the Garden aura to give me strength. Not too many people are able to do that."

For Backlund, it's just routine. ☐

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## In Focus

(Continued from Page 12)

### WHICH ROAD FOR RHODES?

What is Dusty Rhodes up to? Fans seem to have no idea what the American Dream is doing, and perhaps even Dusty himself is unsure of which direction he's headed in.

Dusty has recently wrestled in tag team matches with partners as varied as Junkyard Dog, Andre the Giant, and Tommy "Wildfire" Rich. Unsure of which partner to take on a permanent basis, Rhodes casts doubt on whether he wants to remain a tag team wrestler at all.

In addition, recent comments by Rhodes in the July 1982 issue of *Inside Wrestling* indicate that he has no



RHODES & RICH

desire to regain the NWA heavyweight title.

What's in the future for Dusty Rhodes? I'm not sure even he has the slightest idea.

### THE BIG TIME

Hot on the heels of an appearance in ABC television's *The Fall Guy* series, Andre the Giant will soon be featured on a network special produced by *Sports Illustrated* magazine.

"It's going to be a series of specials on sports," said one spokesman who is involved in the project, "and the format will be sort of a *60 Minutes* on sports. Everyone is very ex-

cited about the show, especially Andre. He's going to be profiled on one of the first installments and it's shaping up into quite a program."

Though not definite, a featured match on the program might well be a recent tag team contest between Andre and partner Tony Atlas against Jesse Ventura and Adrian Adonis.



ANDRE ON THE SET



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## On Assignment

(Continued from Page 18)



With a towel over his mask to stop the flow of sweat, Il awaits the official announcement that he has retained his Florida title (above). Il maintains that the fans make it all worthwhile (opposite right).

what the hell am I abusing myself like this for?"

I didn't think I had to respond. I knew what Il meant, and I also knew that wearing that mask, even if it was white and it reflects the rays of the sun, had to be the closest thing to death in this weather.

He seemed like he wanted to talk, and I knew it was best to shut up and listen. When Deuce talks, wrestling journalists turn on their tape recorders and behave like choir boys.

"You know, Steve, this title, I've lost it and regained it. Don't think it doesn't mean a lot to me.

Georgia's my home, but Florida is the next greatest state in the country. The people are super, and those retired people here in Mami, let me tell you, they have more love in them than people half their age. But you know I've never won the big one [the NWA title], and with all my experience, I don't know how much there is left for me."

Il's head slumped and his discomfort was plain to see. This is a man, I thought to myself, who has given so much of himself to a sport that he loves. Wrestling owes him. Wrestling owes him a lot. And here this

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man sits, sweating like he's in a 200-degree steambox, waiting patiently for a chance to defend his title and bang his body until the sores and welts become almost unbearable. Why, I wanted to ask him. What makes a man go on?

He answered my question as if I had asked it out loud.

"Sometimes I keep going because I believe in fate. I think it's fate that I've never caught the big fish and guys like Race have. I think it's fate that some wrestlers go on for years and some are stopped by crippling injuries in their rookie years. I think it's fate that rulebreakers with morals you could fit in a thimble make big money and good, hard-working Americans can't feed their families. And I guess it's fate that I keep on keeping on. I serve. That's why God put me here and gave me the strength to excel in the ring."

Suddenly I didn't feel so overheated. For without knowing it, Il had spread his wings, accepted me in his embrace, and cooled me with his glow. We sat back, shared a cold one, and waited for the night to come. ☐

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**Press Conference**

(Continued from Page 25)

match won but the stupid referee was too blind to see what actually happened. People came up to me after that match and told me what I already knew: I got a raw deal from the official.

in the first place.

FARHOOD: In any event, Adonis and Ventura have been looking good.

BLASSIE: Naturally. Hell, if you doubt my word about them,

**"Bob Backlund is the geek's geek. He's a weasel of an excuse for a champion. He comes off so damn All-American when in truth he cheats through every single title defense . . ."**

I'm beginning to get fed up with the refereeing in wrestling. Half of these guys don't know what the hell they're doing, and the other half have no credentials for stepping into the ring as refs

answer me this: Why would a magazine like *People* be doing a piece on Adonis and Ventura? Simple. They're the best team in wrestling today, that's all there is to it.

SAKS: Let's change the subject somewhat. I'd like to ask you about Blackjack Mulligan.

BLASSIE: Fire away.

SAKS: Mulligan is a big man . . .

BLASSIE: Biggest and meanest in the sport, except maybe for Andre the Giant, but Andre's more of a circus freak than a man!

SAKS: Do you really think Mulligan's got a good shot at the WWF heavyweight title?

BLASSIE: Damn straight. Adonis and Ventura will take the tag team title and Blackjack Mulligan will take the heavyweight title. Before any of these stupid geeks realizes what's happening around them, Fred Blassie will rule the WWF!

COUNTIS: Sure, but the first time Mulligan came into the WWF, Pedro Morales was the heavyweight champion. Mulligan had title shots and wasn't successful. What makes you think he'll have better luck this time?



An angry-looking Blassie leaves Madison Square Garden after an unsuccessful showing by his wrestlers.



**BLASSIE:** Listen, you sniveling little upstart, the past is the past, and I couldn't give a tinker's damn about what happened years ago. We're looking to the future right now, and the future of WWF wrestling is going to include Blackjack Mulligan as champion.

**FARHOOD:** That clawhold of his, though, it's . . .

**BLASSIE:** It's the most effective weapon in wrestling this side of Adonis' Goodnight Irene. It's a move that sends it's victims kneeling to the mat in submission. It's a move that causes excruciating pain. It's a move that's going to send Blackjack Mulligan straight to the top!

**SAKS:** Bob Backlund sure did a fine job of avoiding the clawhold.

**BLASSIE:** Bob Backlund is the geek's geek. He's a weasel of an excuse for a champion. He comes off so damn All-American when in truth he cheats his way through every single title defense he's ever had over the past four years. His match with Blackjack was anything but fair. He constantly sniveled to the referee about holds and moves, and I wouldn't be surprised in the least if there was a check in the ref's wallet that had Bob Backlund's signature on it. Give my man Mulligan a fair shot at Backlund and that sorry pencil-necked excuse for a champion wouldn't last five minutes.

**FARHOOD:** We're out of time, Fred. Thanks for spending some time with us on Press Conference.

**BLASSIE:** What! Why didn't you pencil-necked geeks ask me about my beautiful wardrobe. What kind of an interview was this? ☐

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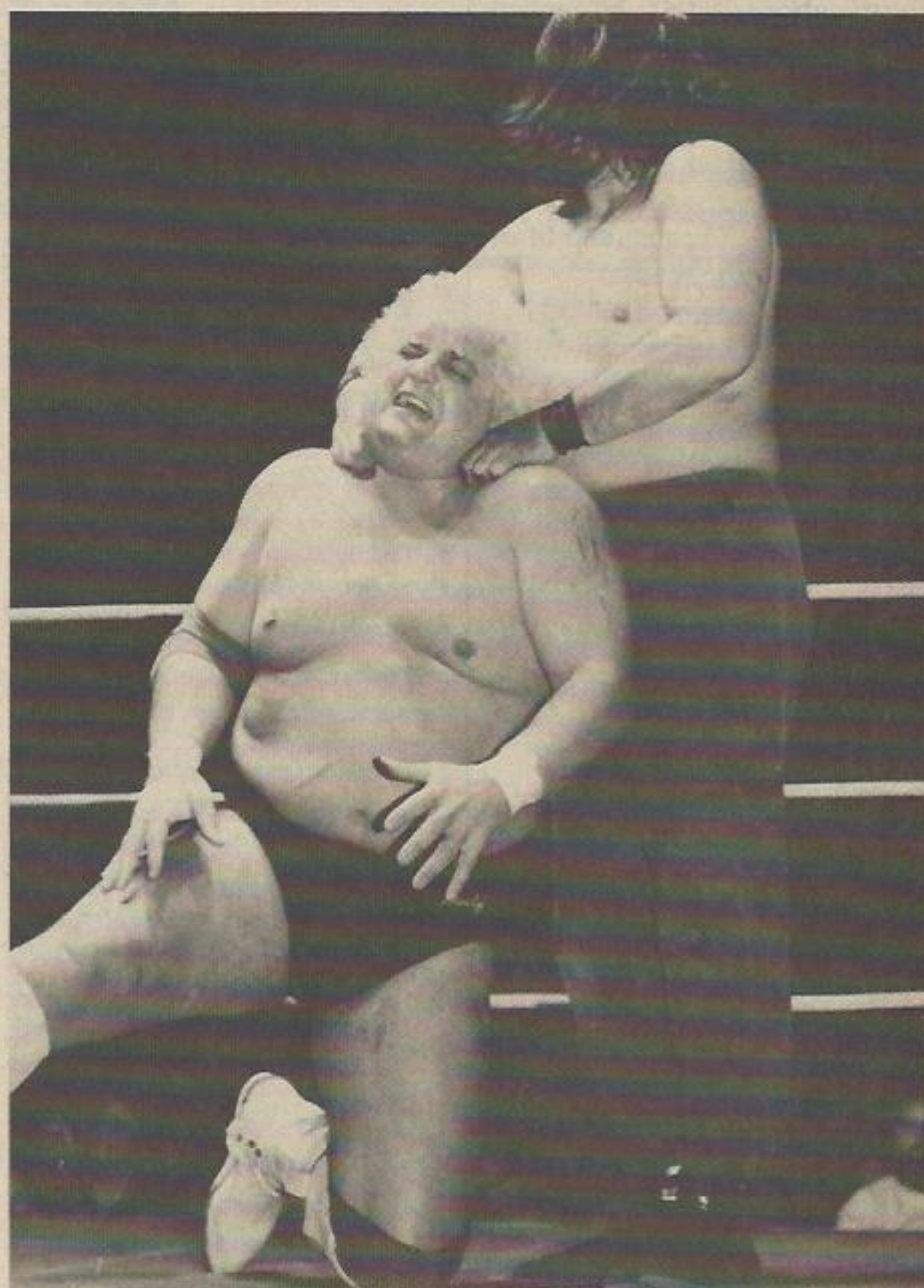
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## Dusty & Andre

(Continued from Page 45)

Most people thought the combination of Rhodes and Andre could not possibly falter. Unfortunately, the intangible factors that separate great individual wrestlers from great tag teams did not work in the popular duo's favor. Dusty suffers greatly as Kabuki locates two pressure points in his neck.

their tag team had failed to live up to their promise of victory. The truth was that they did not make a great tag team. The mutual rhythms that are found in every great tag team just weren't there for Andre and Dusty. Instead, it was a spectacle of two great wrestlers struggling

against themselves to become a team.

"We were our own worst enemies," Dusty would say days later. "Neither one of us could successfully adapt to the other's style. We were like a couple of chickens with our heads cut off. I never want to see films of this match. Remembering it is painful enough."

Those who will watch the films will get an education on how not to make a tag team work. Andre and Dusty do prove they are the most



generous wrestlers in the sport, however. That is their trouble. They keep trying to adapt to the other's style, crippling their own best maneuvers. Neither is sure what the other is doing, and neither can successfully adapt to the other's maneuvers. They are two very different kinds of wrestlers. Rather than working through that problem, they tried to avoid it. That proved a disastrous decision.

Could they possibly ever become a great tag team? Again, Dusty commented days later, "I think we could be one of the best, if we both concentrated on being our best. We have to be more selfish. We were both too willing to accommodate the other guy. Rather than practicing our best moves, we'd practice what we thought the other guy could do best. It was the biggest mistake of our entire lives. Next time, I'll do what I do best, Andre will do what he does best, and we'll both work our butts off to adapt to the other guy's style."

"There's nothing to be ashamed of—except that we didn't batter Destroyer and Kabuki out of the arena. That's the only part that hurts for me. Hell, being a professional athlete means you screw up in public all the time; nobody is perfect. It's just that Destroyer and Kabuki have to be driven out of wrestling. Andre and I had an obligation to do it. We blew it. I'll never forgive myself for that. Never."

Andre doesn't talk about the match at all. He obviously prefers to act as if it never happened. Many top athletes refuse to think about their failures, afraid that the memories will eat into their spirit. Andre only talks about his successes. He has only himself to convince of his greatness. The rest of us know it. □

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